

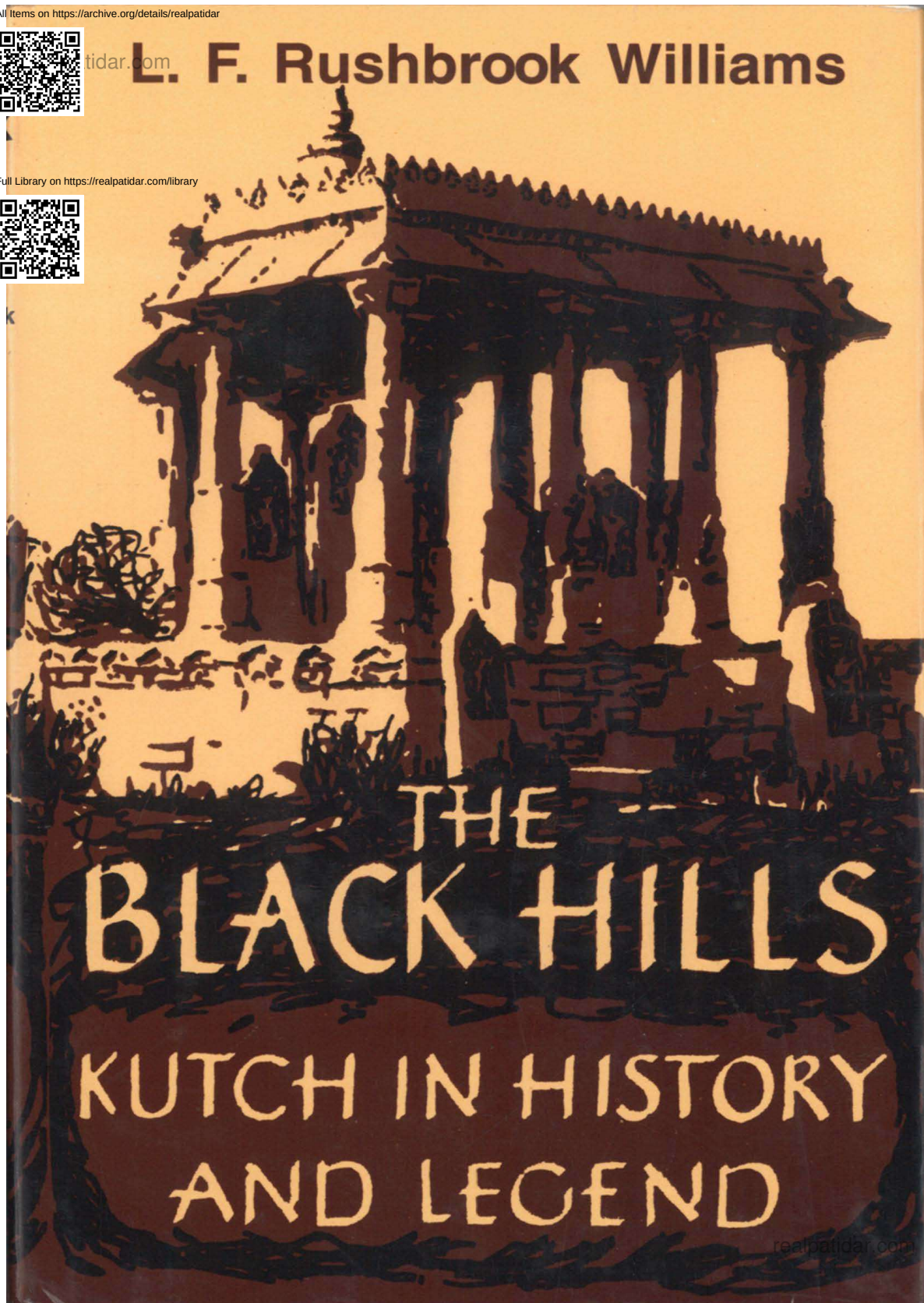


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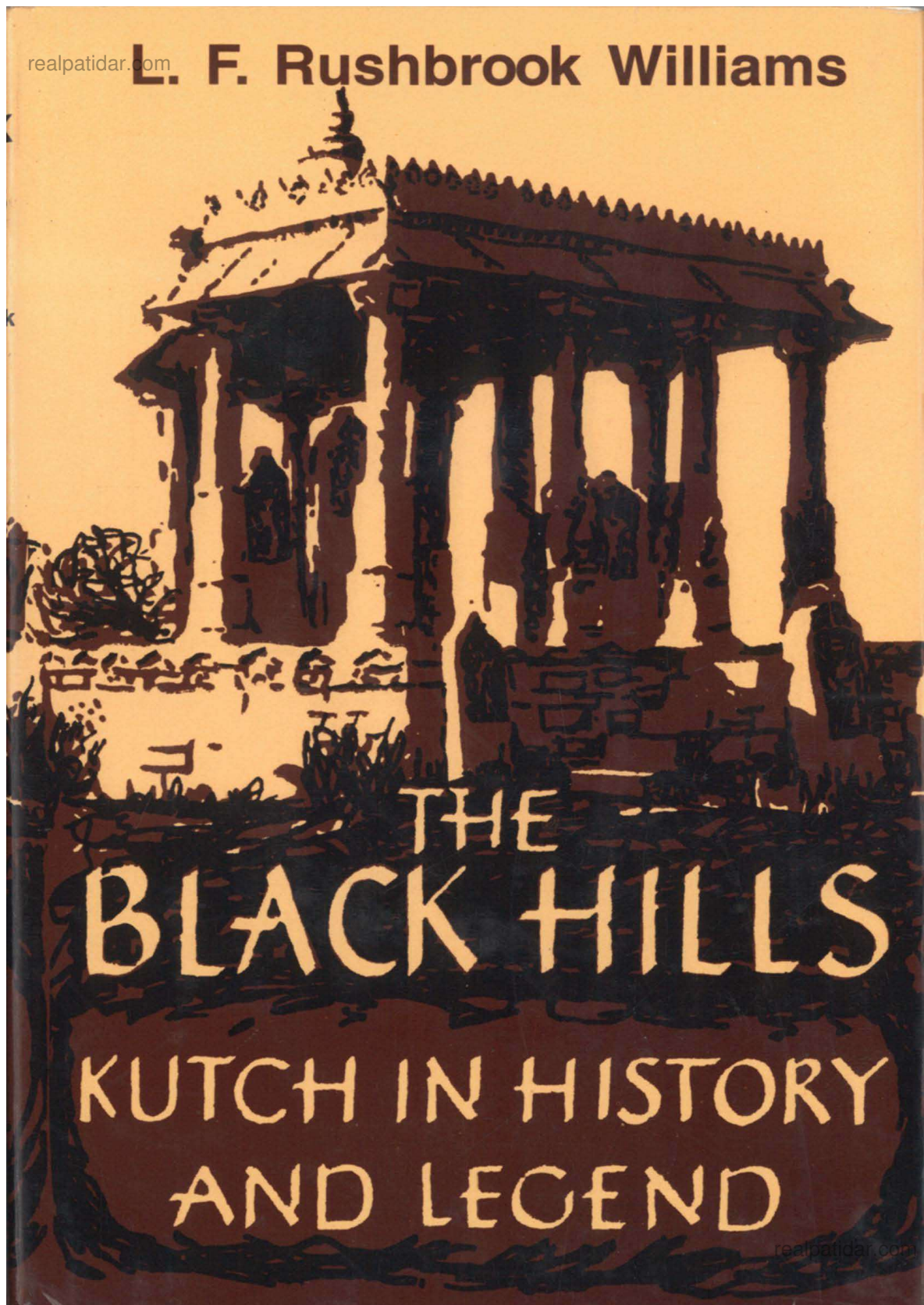
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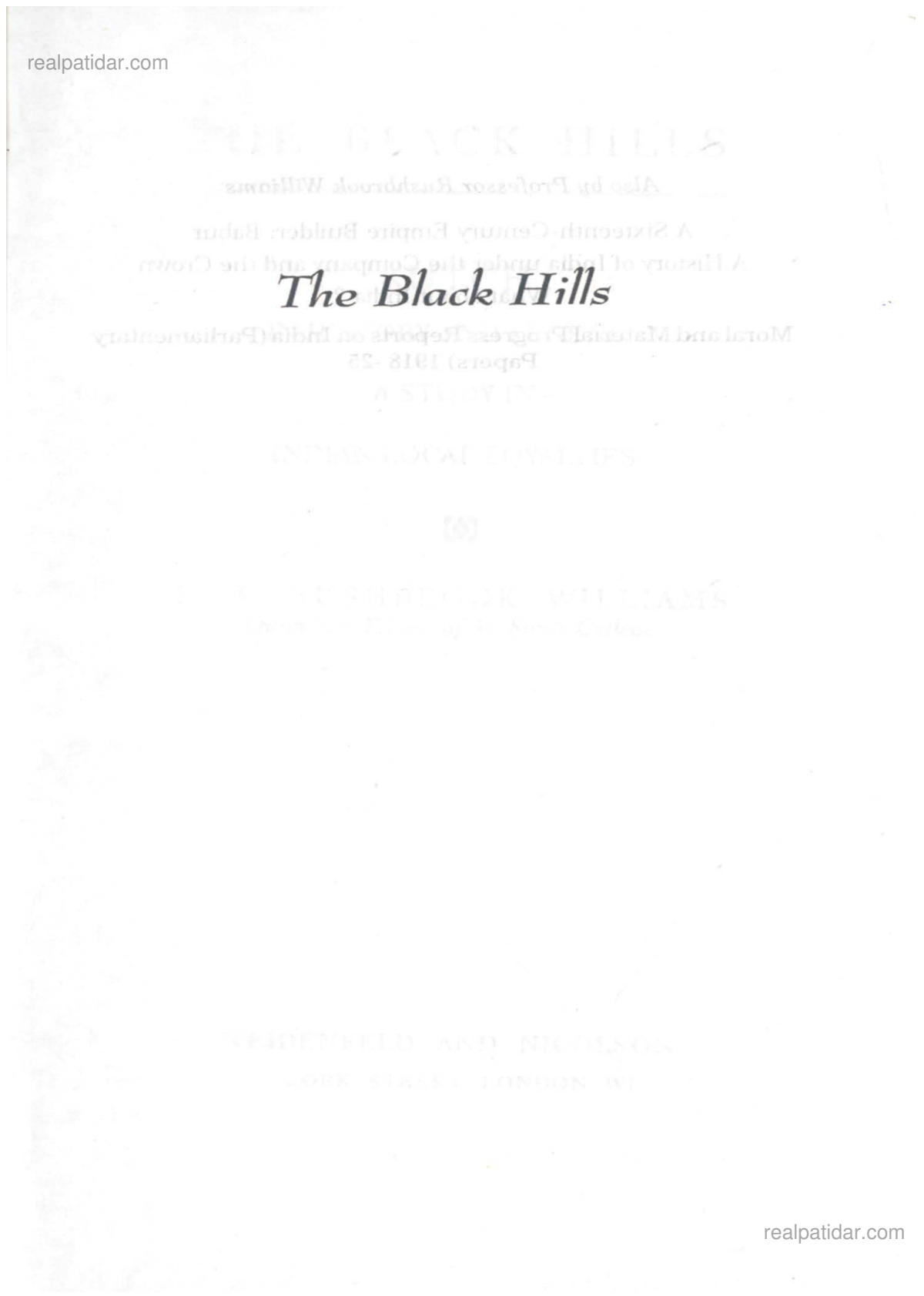
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IN HISTORY AND LEGEND :

A STUDY IN
INDIAN LOCAL LOYALTIES



L. F. RUSHBROOK WILLIAMS
Quondam Fellow of All Souls College

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THE BLACK HILLS

by L. F. Rushbrook Williams

Author of 'The Black Hills of India' and 'The Black Hills of China'

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Hot the black hills of our land
Hot the white milk of our land
Sweet are our water and air
Loyal in heart and in hand
We Kutchis hold true to our land
From a Kutch Dance-Song

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The lake and city wall of Bhuj

Mandvi port, an old photograph

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Foreword

SOME of my Indian and English friends have asked me why I should want to write about Kutch. 'Isn't it rather a backwater? What is there particularly interesting about it?'

It is true that Kutch remained for centuries set apart from the rest of India – though by no means from the rest of the world. It is true that it developed a tradition of separatism. Even after India had become independent, the special character of Kutch was recognized: for eight years it was administered from the Centre as a separate charge. But during that period, Kutchi separatism has gone more and more by the board, so that for the first time in its history Kutch is now integrated with the larger whole from which it had been so long divided.

The accompanying decrease in singularity is being offset by an increasing importance. Political, economic and strategic influences are setting Kutch among the significant areas of the Indian Union. Developments now taking place in this strange semi-island country will affect the pattern of communications and commerce both inside India and between India and the outside world.

The story of how the small, self-contained polity of Kutch has become a factor in India's economic planning seems to me worth telling. The roots of this story lie deep in the past: its significance belongs to the future.

Kutch presents an epitome of the larger story of India—constant invasions; a fusion of cultures; a dawning sense of nationalism. Kutchi annals are full of dramatic episodes; there is a remarkable wealth of 'remembered history', little of which has been written down.



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FOREWORD

James Tod would have done justice to this theme. But his main work lay farther north. Had he devoted to Kutch a fraction of the love which he lavished on Mewar, the kingtly legends of the Jadejas and the pious traditions of the great monastic foundations of Dhinodhar and Modh would be as familiar to historians as are the heroes of Udaipur and the saints of Ajmer. Unfortunately, it is too late to wait for another Tod. Kutch is changing so fast in response to the call of the Indian Union that in a year or two, the few men who still preserve the oral traditions of 'remembered history' will vanish, leaving no successors. India, as well as Kutch, would be the poorer if this ancient lore were lost. It is not only full of interest in itself; it provides a clue to what Kutch is bringing to the cultural heritage, as well as to the economic resources, of India.

Many points of Kutch's story cannot be cleared up until we know more about the history of western India. I have tried to bring together what is known at present, and to weave it into a narrative. I hope this will illustrate, if only by one example, something of the unique wealth of local cultures and local loyalties which are now combining their strength in the new body-politic of the Indian Union.



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PART I

Kutch To-day and To-morrow

The plane which carries mail and passengers between Bombay in India and Karachi in Pakistan took off exactly on time from the civil aerodrome at Ahmedabad. This was creditable to all concerned, because we were embarking a number of Gujarati merchants and their ladies who were travelling to Karachi. The formalities of customs, currency, passports and health, which nowadays beset those who pass between India and Pakistan, had to be transacted. But everything was done smoothly and with little fuss, as befits the Indian Airlines Corporation, which runs the well-oiled and intricate network of air communications inside India. There is probably no other single development in the new India which has affected so profoundly the life and outlook of the Indian people. Enormous distances, which have been a problem to every Indian Government since the times of Asoka, are now bridged in a matter of hours. The remotest parts of the Indian continent are linked by speedy, and remarkably reliable, air-transport. There is scarcely a town in India from which a letter cannot be posted to-day which will reach to-morrow a recipient in any corner of the country.

As the elderly but well-kept Dakota—a mark which remains still the indispensable maid-of-all-work of the Indian air—swung westward on its course to Kutch, I could not help



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reflecting upon the revolution in communications which had enabled me to breakfast in Bombay while looking forward with confidence to a lunch in Bhopal, the capital of Kutch. Very clearly I remembered the tardiness and discomfort of the many journeys which I had made between the mainland and Kutch in earlier days.

RETURN

Two routes used to be available for the traveller to Kutch. He could journey by sea all the way from Bombay to the ancient seaport of Kutch-Mandvi or he could take a twelve-hour railway trip on the broad gauge line to Ahmedabad, change into

the metre-gauge for the slow jog-trot for another twelve hours through Kachhiwad, and then disembark either at Bodi in Nawanshar State, or at Nalakhin in Morvi State, for the

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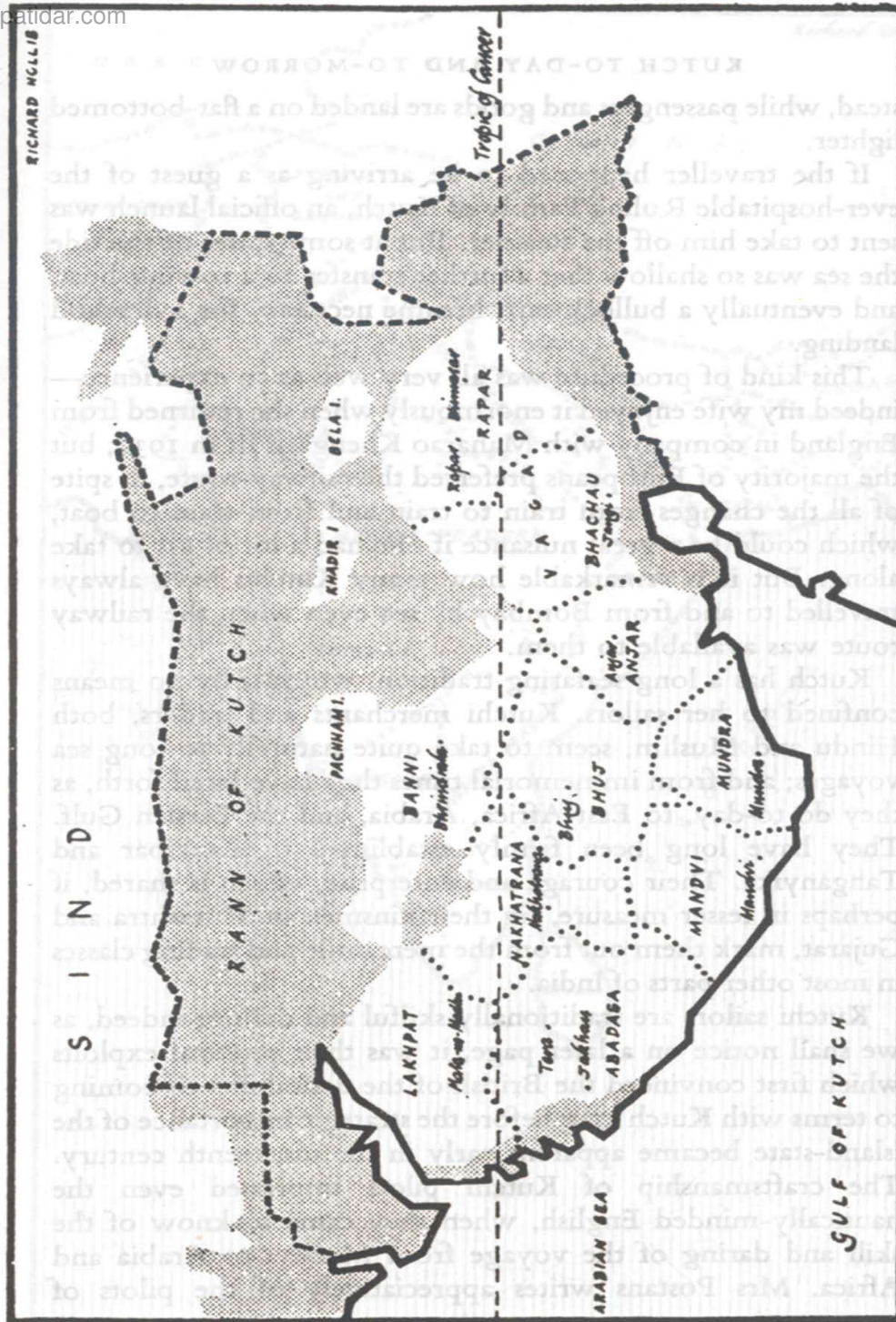
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Two routes used to be open to the traveller to Kutch. He could journey by sea all the way from Bombay to the ancient seaport of Kutch-Mandvi: or he could take a twelve-hour railway trip on the broad gauge line to Ahmedabad; change into the metre-gauge for the slow jog-trot for another twelve hours through Kathiawad, and then embark either at Bedi in Nawanagar State, or at Naulakhi in Morvi State, for the short sea passage to the new port which Maharao Khengarji III of Kutch (1876-1942) had built at Kandla on a deep-water creek, with enormous possibilities for international shipping.

The all-sea route had this advantage—one did not change so often as on the land route. This was quite a point when one had a lot of baggage—or a family—to transport. But it entailed a two-day voyage on the Arabian Sea—which can be horribly rough—in a small steamer which carried deck as well as cabin passengers, closely jammed together with much mixed cargo, including a great deal of livestock which were rather odorous and messy travelling companions. This all-sea route is much the older of the two; and it was for centuries the only way of travelling between Kutch and the Malabar coast. In pre-steamship days it could be dangerous as well as uncomfortable. Mrs Postans, writing in 1839, has described how a state of ‘actual suffering’ was gradually replaced by one of ‘patient endurance’ as day succeeded day in a country-craft. In her time, the voyage from Bombay took anything from ten to twenty days. In one respect, however, travellers to Kutch a hundred years ago were luckier than in my own earlier days. The sturdy, Kutch-built craft in which that intrepid young woman travelled was able to land passengers direct on *terra firma* at Mandvi Port. But the modern steamer has to lie a mile or two offshore in the road-



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stead, while passengers and goods are landed on a flat-bottomed lighter.

If the traveller happened to be arriving as a guest of the ever-hospitable Ruling Family of Kutch, an official launch was sent to take him off the steamer. But at some states of the tide the sea was so shallow that a further transfer to a rowing-boat, and eventually a bullock cart, became necessary for a dryshod landing.

This kind of procedure was all very well as an experience—indeed my wife enjoyed it enormously when she returned from England in company with Maharao Khengarji III in 1932; but the majority of Europeans preferred the railway-route, in spite of all the changes from train to train and from train to boat, which could be a great nuisance if one had a lot of kit to take along. But it is remarkable how many Kutchis have always travelled to and from Bombay by sea even when the railway route was available to them.

Kutch has a long seafaring tradition, which is by no means confined to her sailors. Kutchi merchants and traders, both Hindu and Muslim, seem to take quite naturally to long sea voyages; and from immemorial times they have fared forth, as they do to-day, to East Africa, Arabia, and the Persian Gulf. They have long been firmly established in Zanzibar and Tanganyika. Their courage and enterprise, which is shared, if perhaps in lesser measure, by their kinsmen in Saurashtra and Gujarat, mark them out from the mercantile and trading classes in most other parts of India.

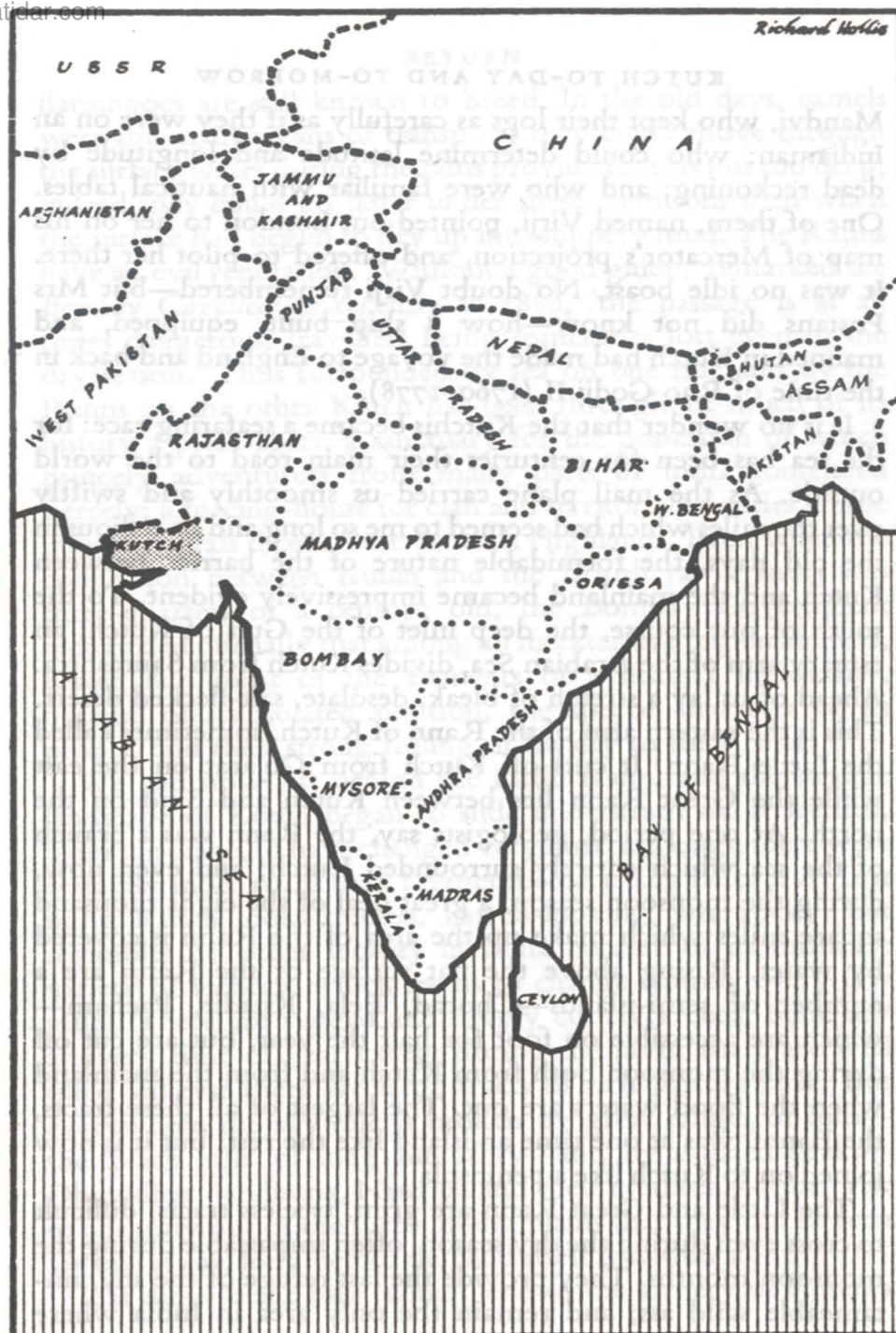
Kutchi sailors are traditionally skilful and daring; indeed, as we shall notice on a later page, it was their piratical exploits which first convinced the British of the desirability of coming to terms with Kutch long before the strategic importance of the island-state became apparent early in the nineteenth century. The craftsmanship of Kutchi pilots impressed even the nautically-minded English, when they came to know of the skill and daring of the voyage from Mandvi to Arabia and Africa. Mrs Postans writes appreciatively of the pilots of

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Mandvi, who kept their logs as carefully as if they were on an Indiaman; who could determine latitude and longitude by dead reckoning; and who were familiar with nautical tables. One of them, named Virji, pointed out London to her on his map of Mercator's projection, and offered to pilot her there. It was no idle boast. No doubt Virji remembered—but Mrs Postans did not know—how a ship built, equipped, and manned in Kutch had made the voyage to England and back in the time of Rao Godji II (1760–1778).

It is no wonder that the Kutchis became a seafaring race: for the sea has been for centuries their main road to the world outside. As the mail plane carried us smoothly and swiftly over the miles which had seemed to me so long and so tedious in the old days, the formidable nature of the barrier between Kutch and the mainland became impressively evident. To the south of our course, the deep inlet of the Gulf of Kutch, an estuary arm of the Arabian Sea, divides Kutch from Saurashtra. Ahead of us lay a stretch of bleak, desolate, salt-flecked desert. This is the eastern arm of the Rann of Kutch, sometimes called the Little Rann. It cuts off Kutch from Gujarat on the east while the Great Rann lies between Kutch and Sind on the north. At one period, geologists say, the Rann was a branch of the sea which entirely surrounded Kutch; and even now, during the monsoon season, a great deal of the eight thousand square miles which make up the area of the Rann is covered by water. Rising above the flat surface of the Rann are a number of semi-islands—Chorad, Bela, Khadir, Pacham—which are accessible on foot for half the year, but are cut off during the monsoon both from Kutch and from the mainland when the flood waters are out. The largest of all these tracts, the Banni, was at one time an island like the rest; but it is now joined on to Kutch like a peninsula.

The Little and Great Rann are grim, treeless tracts, difficult to cross even during the dry season, often impassable during the monsoon months. They provide the last refuge of the shy, untameable wild ass; and remain the only area in India where



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flamingoes are still known to breed. In the old days, camels were the main means of transport; they could move through the surface water during the rains provided it was not too deep; indeed they could go faster under these conditions than when the surface had begun to dry up into slippery mud. The Ranns have an evil reputation. 'Without a good guide,' remarked the *Bombay Gazetteer* as recently as 1880, 'the passage is at all times dangerous, travellers being sometimes lost even in the dry season.' Thus surrounded by sea on one side and by the Ranns on the other Kutch has been throughout much of its history a place apart; a sanctuary for the possession of which princely adventurers from many parts of India contended fiercely; a forcing-house for clan and territorial loyalties whose intensity rivals those of the Scottish Highlands. Even when the connection between Kutch and the British raj in India was three-quarters of a century old, the Bombay Government recognized officially that among all its extensive responsibilities, Kutch had most of the elements of a distinct nationality, because of its isolated position, the special character of its people, and their strong feeling of loyalty to their ruler.

We had now left behind the Little Rann, and the strange landscape of Kutch began to slide underneath us. It seemed, from the plane, to have changed very little, although there were certainly more roads than I remembered seeing before. At first sight, Kutch looks treeless, barren-looking, and rocky: but resembles no other locality in India because of its immense variety of scenery, which seems to change entirely every few miles. There are rugged and deeply cut river beds, bone dry at every time of year except during the rains: there are well tilled valleys: there are large tracts of rich pasture land. But everywhere the sky line is broken by great ranges of hills—the 'black hills' of song and story—and by isolated peaks—Dhinodhar, Jandharia, Nanama and their brethren—which rise so abruptly out of the surrounding plains that they can be seen far out at sea, long before the land itself is within sight.

It is these 'black hills' which lend to the scenery of Kutch a



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strange beauty all its own. At sunrise and sunset, their pinnacles, their domes, their strange, flattened summits glow with colour. In the days of summer, their great flanks cast cool shadows on the plain: their deep gorges, secret and remote, have a magical and awesome stillness. Nowhere in Kutch is one out of sight of the hills. They are the guardian spirits of the land.

Almost all the hills of Kutch are crowned with buildings—temple, shrine, or fort. In older days, Kutchis were great builders; and as the merits of constructing a sanctuary increased if its site was difficult of access, hill tops were often chosen by the pious as suitable locations. Moreover, local saints—of whom there were many—chose the solitude of hill tops both for pious meditation and for the awe-inspiring penances (tapsia) which gave them power over gods as well as over the ordinary course of nature: and shrines were built to commemorate their austerities. It was on the hill tops that the feudal chieftains set the strongholds from which they dominated the countryside, and, on occasion, defied the authority of their overlord the Rao.

It was towards one of the largest of these forts, the citadel of Bhujia, which overlooks the capital from its rocky battlements, with its ancient Snake Temple over all, that our plane was now gliding. This hill-fort is not very old as things go in Kutch; it was built by Rao Godji II about a hundred and seventy years ago as a kind of outwork—defence for Bhuj, itself very strongly fortified with a high and solid stone wall, dominated by towers at frequent intervals. When 'the British Peace' came to Kutch, Bhujia was given over to the Company as a strong-point, and was occupied for a good while after 1819 by a British garrison. It has now been deserted for many years—so much so that when I visited Kutch in the time of Maharao Khengarji III (1876–1942) panthers could often be seen sunning themselves on the battlements in the cool of the evening, as one drove along the road under the walls in company with the Maharao, who was accustomed to take this route almost every day as a relaxation after his work was finished.

From the air, the fort of Bhujia and the walled city of Bhuj,



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like the terrain of Kutch which had passed beneath me, looked very much as they had always appeared during my earlier visits. Would other things have changed more?

To arrive in Kutch in the old days was to step straight into another world. The country had its own time, which differed from that of the rest of India. It maintained the ancient system of watch and ward: the gates of its walled cities—and even of the capital—were locked at sunset; neither ingress nor egress were permitted until day dawned. During all the long rule of Maharao Khengarji III the keys of the five gates of Bhuj were delivered to him every night; every morning they were obtained from him so that the citizens could go about their business beyond the walls, and the long line of bullock carts and camels camped outside could bring in their produce from the countryside. Kutch had its own currency—the kori, the dhingla and the dokda, coined in the Maharao's own mint—instead of the familiar rupee, anna, and pie. Kutch currency was used to keep the price of common commodities low. It was very popular. Its disappearance is regretted by many. Kutchis are great hands at composing songs and rhymes about current events, which are rather like the West Indian calypso. There is a song now current in Kutch in which a child asks its mother: '*Where did the dhingla go? I want guava and almond: I want dates and nuts: I want gram and baked gram—all this for the three pies of our dhingla! Oh where did our dhingla go?*' The mother answers: 'The dhingla has gone, my boy: we have only the anna now!' Nor was the currency all that marked off Kutch from the rest of India: Kutch had—and indeed still has—its own language; if two Kutchis desire to be private, few Gujaratis, leave alone anyone else in India, can understand them. It had its own customs-tariff—goods from Kutch paid duty like goods from a foreign country when they entered India—and vice-versa: for successive Rulers of Kutch had firmly refused to enter the Indian Customs Union. This strange situation passed away for ever in 1948, when the present Maharao Madansinhji, like other great Princes of India, had

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accessed to the Indian Union, and made over his ruling powers—but not his sovereign status—to the Delhi authorities. From June 1948 until November 1956 it was the Government of India, not the Jadeja dynasty, which ruled in Kutch. During that period, Kutch had become part of India. It was administered by a Chief Commissioner appointed by the President of India. Time, coinage, customs-tariff, had become standardized to conformity with Indian practice. In November 1956 a further stage of Kutch's integration with India was reached: Kutch became a District in the new enlarged bilingual state of Bombay, which has absorbed all Gujarat and Saurashtra.



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As the plane circled to land, I saw that the small original airstrip under Bhujia was no longer in use, and that a new airport, complete with the usual buildings had come into existence. This was not surprising, because Bhuj, on the direct line of flight between Karachi and Bombay, had been an obvious staging-point from the very beginning of civil aviation in India. It was strange to recall how I had been driven out by Maharao Khengarji III to welcome the very first plane—and primitive enough it was by modern standards—to land on the soil of Kutch—on its way from Bombay to Karachi; and I remember wondering at the time whether this novel means of transport would do anything to break down Kutch's traditional isolation. But I did not guess that within a relatively few years, regular air services would connect Bhuj every day with Bombay and Karachi, as well as with Bhavanagar, Rajkot, and Jamnagar, in Kathiawad; bringing Bombay within four hours, and Delhi probably within seven hours. It has become possible to reach Kutch as easily and quickly as any other part of India: and to reach any other part of India easily and quickly from Kutch. The change was revolutionary: for the first time in all its history the obstacles which divide Kutch from the outside world had been overcome. I was eager to see what was happening in the territory which I was visiting for the first time after many years.



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Except for the fact that I was travelling by plane, there was much to remind me of my arrivals in earlier days. I was in the company of the Maharao, His Highness Madansinhji of Kutch, whose guest I was, just as I had, in their times, been the guest of his father and of his grandfather. As we touched down, I saw assembled at the airport a large gathering of officials and local notables, ready to greet the Maharao, just as they would have assembled in the old days at the station to meet the special train, or on the jetty to meet the launch, of the Ruler. The Maharao stepped from the plane; he was greeted by high officials and by his relatives; he inspected the guard of honour; his salute of guns thundered out according to protocol; a large crowd waved and shouted greetings from behind barriers. Superficially, the reception might have been of the kind accorded to any ruling prince returning to his State in the old days. In essence, it was entirely different. Take the case of the Maharao himself.

His own position bears little relation to that occupied by his ancestors for so many centuries. True, he is Maharao of Kutch, of the line of Sri Krishna, head of the great clan of Jadeja Rajputs, seventeenth in descent from the conqueror Rao Khengarji I, who united Kutch as his contemporaries the Tudors united England. He is accorded, as by right, all the dignities and courtesies inseparable from that great position. But although he is still Maharao, he is not Ruler, of Kutch. The officials who greet him are not his servants: they are not subject to his orders; they are servants of the Indian Government. It is not from his own guns that the salute is fired. He has neither army nor bodyguard of his own. He has no direct authority in the State where once his ancestors' word was law. His possessions are limited to a few pleasant houses, a hunting preserve or two and some villages which belong to him personally. Yet even if Kutch is no longer his, he has achieved a position in international affairs which none of his ancestors, for all their distinguished records at Imperial Conferences, and at gatherings of the nations, had equalled. He has served his



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country with distinction abroad; first as Minister in the Indian High Commission in London. The experience which he thus gained has stood him in good stead in his new career; he has now become India's first Ambassador to Norway. He is a sportsman as well as a diplomat; and he has done much to make the name of India honoured in the new and old world among the ranks of international tennis players. If his career as Ruler of Kutch has come to an end, through his accession to the Indian Union a few months after he had succeeded his father, a new, and wider, career in the service of his country has opened to him.

Inside Kutch, the Maharao's position is a difficult and rather delicate one. Except among educated people, in the towns and larger villages, few Kutchis understand what has happened under the new dispensation. Loyalty to the Maharao is traditional: wherever he goes, village women gather to sing the ancient songs of homage reserved only for the Prince of the Land, while men run eagerly from their labour to lay their turbans at his feet. It is to him that they look, for help in their difficulties, for patronage, for royal favours, as their ancestors have been accustomed to do for many centuries. Yet the authority which alone could enable him to grant their petitions is no longer his. The machine of administration is outside his control, even outside his influence. He has no power to modify its operation in any way, even if he were not—as he is—far too wise to try. His charities are extensive; but they cannot be unlimited, because they are met from his private means, without the support of the State revenues. It speaks well both for the Maharao and for the local representatives of the Government that the understanding between them is excellent; and that each side does its best to help and support the other. But the simple villagers are still bewildered; and it is little wonder that the Maharao does his utmost to restrict the duration of visits to Kutch, which too often lead to almost heartbreaking disappointment for those simple people who cannot realize that the old days have gone.



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The 'strong feeling of personal loyalty' to their Ruler, which the Government of Bombay noted as a characteristic of the people of Kutch during the last century, has begun to yield in the towns and among the educated classes, to the wider instinct of loyalty to the Indian Republic, and to the Congress Party, as the leading political group. Kutchi town dwellers are truly urbanized—more urbanized perhaps than town dwellers in many other parts of India. Their outlook is that of the modern business man. Yet the older tradition of 'kingly-mindedness', which leads men to look to a person rather than to some abstraction called the State, remains very active throughout the countryside. Of the 567,000 people who live in Kutch, 80 per cent, or 454,000, live in villages and are still relatively untouched by the transmutation of loyalties which has overtaken the townsmen. In this respect, Kutch resembles the larger entity of India, where the immense personal authority wielded first by Mr Gandhi and afterwards by the present Prime Minister over the rural masses is the direct result of the Indian habit of identifying authority with an individual rather than with an institution. The people who gather in such immense numbers to see Mr Nehru wherever he goes, to welcome him, and to pay the traditional respect of 'homage from a distance' (*darshan*) are led to do these things, not because he is their Prime Minister, but because he is the Leader of the Nation, the embodiment of the new, free, vital India. In the present stage of the Republic's political development, the almost royal authority which has thus been thrust upon Mr Nehru represents a dynamic influence of the greatest possible value because it strengthens the confidence of the masses in, and their attachment to, the new regime.

By contrast, on the smaller stage of Kutch, the old attachment to the person of the Maharao, who no longer enjoys either ruling powers or the authority to redress grievances, has inevitably become something of an anachronism, a relic of the past rather than an ingredient in the future which is now unfolding. In these circumstances, while the Maharao's known

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support for the new regime has proved extremely useful—and indeed indispensable in bridging the gap between past and present, his physical presence in the State which he once ruled tends to become an increasing source of embarrassment to himself and to others as the old order of things changes ever more quickly. On the other hand, it has to be remembered that for every Kutchi who habitually lives and works inside Kutch, there is another Kutchi who habitually lives and works outside, whether in Bombay, Calcutta, East Africa, Aden, the Persian Gulf, Europe, or the United States. To these people, the Maharao remains the symbol both of their homeland, and of their attachment to the new India of which their homeland has become a part. In true Kutchi tradition, Maharao Madansinhji is a great traveller; and wherever he finds the Kutch people, his presence strengthens and endorses their patriotic feelings and their pride in the new Kutch which is now displaying so much vitality.

The fact that half the total population of Kutch is working outside the State is due partly to the maritime tradition which has already been noted, and partly to the difficulties of making a good livelihood at home. The rainfall is uncertain and irregular; and at least once every decade a serious measure of crop failure and of shortage of fodder for cattle can be confidently expected. There are no perennial rivers; and the water which the monsoon brings has to be stored. The difficulty is that the rainfall, when it comes, is highly localized: as much as seventeen inches has been recorded in four hours; and thirty-one inches in thirty-six hours is not unknown. But such heavy falls occur only in particular areas—often only over a few square miles; and the problem of controlling and utilizing these sudden spates of enormous velocity, which carry off the top soil, denude the hillsides and pastures, and then run off to waste, has proved very difficult to solve. Throughout the nineteenth century successive Rulers of Kutch experimented with dams, tanks and storage works: but it was Maharao Khengarji III in particular, who devoted much personal energy to the task of



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improving the means of water-storage. He employed the best experts he could find, whether European or Indian, to advise him. As is often the case with those who break new ground, his efforts to formulate a comprehensive plan for water conservation did not achieve all that he had hoped. Wisely he arranged for a thorough survey of the entire country to ascertain its irrigation possibilities; but the long and toilsome journeys of investigation which he and his experts made over thousands of miles by camel, horse and car served for the most part rather to reveal new difficulties than to suggest ways of solving them. Some of the projects which looked so hopeful, and had been commended to him by expert opinion, broke down because of exceptional local conditions of a kind not experienced elsewhere. But others succeeded: and by degrees the new and difficult techniques upon which success depended were worked out. By 1930, the Maharao's perseverance, in spite of the many set-backs and disappointments which he had suffered, had resulted in the preparation of designs for a number of practical projects which were to take shape during the succeeding decade; and before he died in 1942 he had the satisfaction of knowing that he had pioneered the way which those who came after him could follow with confidence. The great Khengar Sagar is imperishably connected with his memory. It is, in fact, only one of the lakes, storage-tanks and canals which he constructed—among them being the channel which supplies water from the Viri springs to the new port of Kandla which he created.

His son, Maharao Vijayarajji, father of the present Maharao, sought further expert advice from the Government of India on the practicability of the plan of irrigating Kutch by means of storage dams, and on the efficiency with which the projects already in being were being executed. At that period, there were some in Kutch who hoped that a proportion of the waters of the Indus could be diverted to benefit the State: and Kutch's claim to such a share was already acknowledged by the Central Water Power Irrigation and Navigation Committee set up by



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the then Government of India in 1945. Yet however attractive this proposition might appear at first sight, most people in Kutch believed that the Indus waters had never done more than touch the western tip of the country near Lakhpat; and that the best that could be expected from them would be some small inundation-project useful only in the rainy season. Local opinion therefore supported Maharao Vijayarajji in continuing his father's policy. But it is interesting to notice that since the partition of the Indian sub-continent, the new Government of India have shown some disposition to press Kutch's claim to a share of the Indus waters on the attention of the Government of Pakistan. The dispute which occurred between the two countries in 1955-56 over Chad Beth, to which further reference is made below, may at any time bring the 1945 finding about Indus waters into prominence again. It is sufficient here to remark that, during the rule of Maharao Vijayarajji, the greatest of all the works—named Vijaya Sagar—was constructed, and was opened formally after his death by Maharao Madansinhji. It has a capacity of 735 million cubic feet of water and, when full, can irrigate 10,000 acres. It is a magnificent sight, impressive both in extent and in construction. But it, too, depends entirely on rainfall; and when its wide catchment-area escapes the capricious attention of the monsoon, it lies as useless as a crippled giant. Yet in any season, it may suddenly spring to life, a source of new hope to the cultivators for miles around; and it is by such works as this that the agricultural economy of Kutch can be set upon a sound footing. By the time that Kutch passed under the control of the Government of India, twenty-three major storage tanks and other irrigation works had been completed, and three more were under construction.

The new regime in Kutch has been able to follow up the same line of progress with all the immense resources of the Indian revenues behind it. The number of irrigation tanks has been increased to thirty-six. In the Government of India's first Five Year Plan (1951-56) provision was made for eleven



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new large tanks, of which eight have been completed: while under the Grow More Food Scheme, which has met with success in Kutch as in other parts of India, eleven smaller works have been constructed. The second Five Year Plan provides for a further increase of twelve in the total number of irrigation projects: and there is now complete confidence among the experts that the permanently irrigated area can be raised from the present figure of 12,000 acres to 106,000 acres out of a gross cropped area of 930,000 acres. This will mean that the production of food grains in Kutch can be raised by 30,000 tons and the production of fodder by 50,000 tons. The prospect of thus making Kutch self-sufficient in food and fodder, for the first time in its long history, fills the officials of to-day with a legitimate pride, which sometimes inclines them to forget that they are, after all, doing no more than pursuing, with the added impetus derived from the greater resources at their command, the policy which was devised and followed, with much public spirit and at the cost of heavy sacrifices, by the former Rulers. Again, while well-boring has made substantial progress—for the country (except the Rann) is not so badly off for subsoil water as was sometimes imagined by old-time Viceroy and other 'cold weather' visitors who came to what they were accustomed to call 'waterless Kutch' during the winter months—it is not always remembered that at the time when the State was handed over, more than 28,000 deep-bore wells had been constructed by the old regime to assist the farmers.

To set the achievements of the new regime in the field of irrigation in just perspective is not to underestimate the advantages which Kutch has already derived, and will no doubt derive in increasing measure in the future, from its integration with the rest of India. So long as Kutch stood in isolation, as it were, it could raise no external loans for development purposes. In spite of the tradition of frugality and simple living which has characterized the Ruling House for generations, both the Ruler and the State were poor in comparison with other Rulers and other States of equivalent prestige and area



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elsewhere in India. Even the most careful husbanding of the available resources could not render them adequate to the demands made upon them for irrigation; agricultural development; exploitation of mineral wealth; improvement of communications; encouragement of industry and commerce; establishment of local self-government; extension of education, health, and the social services; together with everything else that the needs of the modern world dictate. In consequence, during the old days advances were possible only along a limited sector of the total front at any given time; progress in one direction had to be achieved at the cost of stagnation, or even sometimes of retrogression, in another direction. Since advance was partial and uneven, the advantages gained in one sector could not be reflected in any general rise of living standards; and were, indeed, often lost for lack of the corresponding progress in allied sectors which could alone have consolidated a permanent and substantial improvement. Over all the careful, anxious planning of Ruler after Ruler there hovered the appalling shadow of the erratic rainfall, which might in any year reduce the land revenue almost to nothing, and divert, to the overmastering urgencies of relieving famine and obviating deaths from hunger, the very funds which had been prudently accumulated over a long period for carrying out projects of economic development or schemes of social welfare.

Of this agonizing situation the new administration in Kutch has been blessedly free. Its resources have not depended upon the local revenues. It could, and did, call upon the solid financial strength of India not only to meet its current requirements but also to enable it to press forward with existing developments and to initiate new ones. Sums which would be deemed astronomical by any former reckoning could be spent upon the development of Kandla Port without curtailing the extension of irrigation projects, of schools, of medical relief, of communications. A new and efficient Department of Statistics enabled the needs and the resources of Kutch to be accurately assessed. Where priorities were essential, they could be deter-



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mined with sureness, in the certainty that no relevant factor had been overlooked. Simultaneous advances could be planned along a whole range of interdependent sectors; the ground gained could be scientifically consolidated by corresponding advances in surrounding sectors of administrative activity. Opportunities could be seized in time; planning could be made flexible as well as far-reaching. The expert cadres of the All-India Services have been drawn upon. Competent and well-trained officials, in the lower as well as in the administrative grades, have been posted to Kutch, as to any other part of India. The Government of Kutch, from the time when the Government of India took over until the merging of Kutch into the enlarged state of Bombay in 1956, had a sanctioned strength of nearly 5,500 officials great and small.

The Governmental machine thus built up had no doubt the defects of its qualities. It was somewhat impersonal in operation: its traditions were bureaucratic. It had brought to Kutch many strangers whose ways were unfamiliar. It had behind it the unchallengeable authority of the Government of India: it could exercise efficiently the responsibilities entrusted to it. In the space of eight years, it did much to bring Kutch forward; and to fit Kutchis to play their part in the India of to-day and to-morrow. Although it had built, in many cases at least, on foundations which had been laid by the old regime, it had both consolidated them and enlarged them to meet the requirements of the new age.

Many Kutchis, in the towns at least, hold that the separate Government of Kutch, which lasted from June 1948 to November 1956 deserved well of the people. They deplore its merger into the administration of the enlarged bi-lingual State of Bombay, according to the recommendation of the States Reorganization Commission, as accepted, after a good deal of hesitation, by the Government of India. In particular, they regret the replacement of the Chief Commissioner, direct representative in Kutch of the Government of India, by a Collector, whose first loyalty is naturally to the Government of

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the new State at Bombay, rather than to the Central Government at Delhi—which could always be relied upon to view the needs of Kutch impartially without regard to the historic rivalries between Kutch and Gujarat and Kutch and Saurashtra. Yet the merger of Kutch, along with its ancient rival, Saurashtra, into the new larger unit is the logical completion of the process which began when Kutch lost its traditional isolation by becoming part of the new India. As such, it must be considered both inevitable and healthy, even if it gives rise to some natural anxiety among those who will be most affected by it. Exactly how the change will operate in practice, no one in Kutch can clearly foresee. It is understood that the expenditure allocated by the Government of India to the development programme of Kutch will not be curtailed. It would be a tragedy, not only for Kutch but for India as a whole if Delhi were to lose interest in schemes of such potential significance for the nation as those which are now in progress in that State.

To travel through Kutch to-day after an absence of some two decades is to appreciate how much progress has been made during that period in many directions. While the knowledge one derived from these earlier visits does not support the claim, sometimes put forward by earnest and enthusiastic members of the Congress Party, that until June 1948, when the Government of India assumed the administration, little was done for the people at large, it is nevertheless obvious that Kutch has benefited enormously from the efficient administrative machinery, and, above all, from the participation in Indian resources, which the take-over made possible. The effects are seen in many directions. Even the mere act of travelling has become easier. There are now good roads between Bhuj, the capital, and every district headquarters. The original network of fair-weather roads has been extended to 700 miles: the first Five Year Plan has provided for 360 miles of permanent State highways, fully equipped with culverts, bridges and causeways, at a cost of more than £400,000: and the length of all-weather roads between the ten principal towns in the State, and of



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secondary feeder roads from villages to highways is to be largely increased under the second Five Year Plan. This great extension of the road system is something which no previous government of Kutch could ever afford, and all parts of the State will eventually benefit from it. Quite probably, certain of its features, for example the impressively broad and well-engineered road from Nakhatrana to Lakhpat, have been given priority for strategic reasons. Now that Sind has become part of Pakistan, Kutch is a frontier area; and the centuries-old disputes between Kutch and Sind over grazing rights in some of the Rann 'islands' have taken on an international significance. When a quarrel broke out in 1955-56 over the collection of grazing dues in Chad Beth, Lakhpat became an important outpost of India. A press of military traffic streamed rapidly westward along the new Nakhatrana-Lakhpat road: and it was clear that the Indian Defence Ministry had long foreseen the strategic importance of the area which the highway was planned to serve.

The Nakhatrana-Lakhpat road is far from being purely strategic even if strategic considerations partly account for the priority which has been given to it. It will open up the entire western 'tip' of Kutch, for long the most sparsely-populated portion of the State, and will enable valuable deposits of lignite, gypsum, and rock-salt to be exploited commercially. Under the second Five Year Plan, there will be service-roads to connect the places where these deposits are found—Sahara, Ghureri, Julrai—with the main highway and with each other.

The rapid growth of the system of internal communications is doing as much as any other factor to knit all the parts of Kutch closely together, and to break down the traditional isolation of districts which have been considered relatively inaccessible. Mechanical transport is taking quick advantage of the opportunities now open, and both cars and lorries are multiplying. It is perhaps significant of the traditional Kutchi habit of travelling principally on business, that there are four times as many lorries—which, of course, are important



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primarily for the transport of goods and commodities—as passenger buses. But as the service roads between villages and the main highways increase, passenger transport increases with them. There is a Kutch State Motor Service, operating about seventy buses, which now serves some 300 of the 1,000 or so villages in Kutch, covering a million miles a year and carrying about 4,000 passengers every day. A considerable extension of the system is inevitable; and is foreshadowed by a growing popular demand for more and better roads. Kutchis are hardy people, who make light of discomfort; but the contrast between the unmetalled fair-weather roads of the countryside, with their choking dust and uneven surfaces, and the good all-weather roads near the larger towns, is not lost upon the increasing number of those who find buses convenient, or cars essential, for life as it is lived in Kutch to-day.

This internal demand for improved means of communication is being reinforced by external factors. A new National Highway is now in course of construction which will link Kutch by road to Ahmedabad. It will run from the new town of Gandhidham and Kandla Port across the Little Rann to Morvi; then through Saurashtra to Viramgam; and finally from Viramgam to Ahmedabad. Before long, a stream of cars, buses, and commercial vehicles will pass to and fro between Kutch and the outside world of Saurashtra, Gujarat, and the rest of India. No part of Kutch can long remain unaffected; and a rapid development of internal communications is inevitable.

No doubt as one consequence of the isolation in which Kutch has lived for centuries, the State now seems to be passing at a bound from the age of the bullock cart to the era of the car and the aircraft. The intermediate stage of rail communications which has bulked so large in the development of internal transport in many other parts of the world—including India herself—has, in Kutch, been almost entirely by-passed. It is true that Maharao Khengarji III, a pioneer in this as in so many other fields, linked his new Port of Kandla with the important



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town of Anjar and with Bhuj, his capital, by fifty-five miles of railway track which is still in constant use. For many years, this was the only railway line in Kutch. Had the Maharao had his way, he would also have linked Kandla with Deesa, about three hundred miles north of Bombay, and so with the main railway system of western India: thereby bringing the advantages of the far shorter haul which Kandla provides, as against Bombay, to a larger hinterland inhabited by nearly fifty million people. But because Kutch was outside the Indian Customs Union, serious administrative obstacles intervened: the Government of India refused its sanction except on terms which the Maharao felt that he could not accept: the financial implications proved insuperably difficult: and the project remained an unrealized dream.

It has now been taken up by the Government of India, as part of the general scheme for developing the natural advantages of Kutch for the benefit of the Union at large. A metre-gauge railway-link between Kandla and Gandhidham in Kutch, and Deesa on the Indian mainland, was opened in 1952. Kutchi passengers can now travel by train from the magnificent new station at Gandhidham—opened by the President of India himself—to any place served by the Indian railway system. This link, the fulfilment of Maharao Khengarji's vision, makes Kandla the natural port for north Gujarat, Rajasthan, Delhi, western Uttar Pradesh, and the East Punjab—in other words, for the entire Indian portion of the hinterland which Karachi formerly served before it became the seaport, as well as the capital city, of Pakistan. But essential though this development of railway communications with India doubtless is for the future prosperity of Kutch in general and of Kandla Port in particular, it is open to doubt whether there is any great scope for a considerable extension of railway facilities inside Kutch. The narrow-gauge track between Kandla and Bhuj has been improved indeed to meter-gauge to bring it into line with the Kandla-Deesa link. But for the rest, it is upon roads, not railways, that Kutch will depend increasingly for internal com-

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munications, especially now that lorries and buses are beginning to function so rapidly and so economically in transporting goods and passengers from one part of the State to another. Nor should it be forgotten that roads, not railways, are the obvious connecting-links between the towns of Kutch and the aircraft, which by enabling miles to be bridged in minutes, have made Kutch's traditional remoteness from the rest of India a vanishing memory of the past. A pointer to the probable tune of development is to be found in the establishment of a new airport, of protected international status, not far from Anjar, which will serve Gandhidham and Kandla, and will bring to Kutch much of the air-traffic from the area formerly served by Karachi airport before Pakistan was created.

There are still a number of places in Kutch which are by no means easily accessible—at any rate in reasonable comfort. But even where roads have not yet been improved, the jeep can reach in a day localities which would, in former times, have entailed a journey of thrice that duration by pony or camel. As a result, officers from headquarters can keep closely in touch with their subordinates in any part of the State; inspections are frequent; outlying districts can be roused from apathy; policies laid down at headquarters for the State as a whole can be enforced everywhere: and progress can be achieved simultaneously along a wide front. All this has given many Indian visitors to Kutch the impression that almost everything that they see in the way of development owes its inception to the regime which began in 1948, when the State was taken over by India: in fact this development depends upon foundations which were laid far earlier, and have provided the essential basis for the efficient and impressive structure which is being now erected upon them.



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NEVERTHELESS, it is obvious to the visitor that the activities of Government in Kutch to-day range over a far wider field than anything which has been known before. The very best use is being made of the pioneering work of earlier administrations: and there is a noticeable readiness to launch out in new directions which this work has suggested. As one illustration of this, the present progressive policy of afforestation may be cited. In the first half of the last century, nothing impressed English visitors to Kutch so unfavourably as the bareness of the countryside, and the complete absence both of trees, and of anything that could be considered jungle. This state of affairs was the combined result of centuries of denudation of the soil caused by destructive torrents during the rains; and of the merciless cropping of everything green by the large herds of camels, and especially of goats, which roamed everywhere and grazed at will. In 1880 the *Bombay Gazetteer* described Kutch as a 'bare country with no forest and few trees'. But that great innovator, Maharao Khengarji III, was already wrestling with the problem. He was the first to set aside definite areas known as *Rakhals* in which tree-felling and grazing were prohibited under stiff penalties enforced by an adequate service of forest guards. The *Rakhals* were partly used as game sanctuaries; for the Maharao, in addition to being a great naturalist and hunter,



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was passionately devoted to the study of wild life in all its forms. These preserves were partly used as grass farms, from which fodder for the State horses could be secured. But over and above everything else, their purpose was to give newly-planted trees and undergrowth a chance to grow up; and to check the centuries-old process of denudation by means of a deliberate policy of afforestation.

The innovation was greatly disliked by villagers, goatherds, and shepherds, who had been accustomed to allow their animals to graze at will; and the Maharao was criticized in some Indian papers for sacrificing the interests of the people to his own passion for wild life. Exactly the same criticism was being directed at the time against the Forest Department of the Government of India; but in both cases, action of the kind taken was quite essential in the interests of posterity. Year by year, the number of *Rakhals* in Kutch increased; and gradually people became used to them, ceased to resent them, and, indeed, began to take them as a matter of course. By the time that Maharao Khengarji died in 1942, there were nearly two hundred square miles of forest reserves in Kutch—almost too much, in fact, to be exploited scientifically with the resources which were available. But the excellent advice which the Maharao constantly sought from his old friend Sir Peter Clutterbuck, for long Director-General of the Indian Forest Service, had been carefully followed; so that the Maharao's foresight and courage brought two clear gains. In the first place, valuable experience had been acquired about the types of trees which were best suited for the requirements of Kutch, both to check denudation and to yield marketable timber; and secondly, the foundations of a plan for reafforestation had been firmly laid.

When the Government of India took over control of the State, there was considerable local pressure for the modification of the game laws which had done so much to preserve wild life in Kutch. Game licences were issued freely in response to the allegations, made by urban political leaders, that cattle and



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crops were suffering from the depredations of panthers, wild pig, and deer which had been 'artificially' preserved. In consequence, the regulations governing the sanctity of wild life were so far relaxed that a great deal of indiscriminate shooting took place, not so much by the newly-armed villagers, as by middle-class townsfolk who sallied out in cars, along good roads, for a day's hunting, either for the market or for the pot. For some time, this indiscriminate shooting was permitted even in some of the *Rakhals*; but before long the danger which it presented both to the survival of wild life in any form, and to the proper utilization of the forests for economic purposes became realized; and new regulations, particularly relating to shooting in the close season, have at least nominally been introduced. Moreover, while political pressure has resulted in the abandonment of some former *Rakhals* to grazing and even to attempts at cultivation (which have, somewhat naturally, proved disappointing) considerable pains have been taken to ensure the scientific management of those which remain. There is still a long way to go before the forests which are being built up in Kutch can attain the 'classified' status;¹ but the beginning has been made; and there is a small but steady annual revenue from the extraction of firewood, grass and fodder. Moreover, there are plans on foot to use the knowledge gained from Maharao Khengarji's bold venture for the gradual afforestation of the Banni area, and, indeed, of parts of the Rann itself. If this proves successful, it will greatly benefit Kutch by increasing the available pastures. More and better grazing will give better prospects of improved living-standards than an increase in the cropped area. The rural population as a whole is pastoral rather than agricultural: cattle, sheep and goat-raising, rather than crop-growing, seems the most profitable line of economic advance for most of the countryside. Moreover, this pursuit is better adapted to the erratic rainfall which afflicts the area; for where grass will flourish, a comparatively small rainfall, eked out from resources stored in the new tanks and irrigation works,

¹ That is, showing a defined proportion of revenue to capital expenditure.

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enables cattle and herds to be kept in good heart, although the same amount would be almost worse than useless to the agriculturalist.

There are nearly twice as many animals as people in Kutch. Among them are nearly 300,000 cows, bulls and bullocks. The Kutchi cow has long been one of the very best dual-purpose strains in all India; the Kankrej and Thani breeds being particularly famous. All the Governments which have ruled Kutch since historic times have been concerned to maintain these strains; and the difficulty of selecting good animals for breeding purposes, and preventing the multiplication of poor specimens—always a problem in places where cow-killing is regarded with detestation—has been overcome by segregating throw-backs to the peaceful seclusion of Gosadans and Pinjrapoles, where they can live out their lives without passing on undesirable characteristics. Since the Government of India took over the administration, a great deal of care has been devoted to the encouragement of selected strains, with the result that Kutchi cattle carry off many of the prizes and certificates in the All India cattle shows. Twelve 'Key Village' centres have been established up and down Kutch; and in each there are two carefully-selected pedigree bulls, to which approved cows are brought for stud purposes. In addition, there are three artificial insemination centres, one at Bhuj, one at Anjar, and one at Nakhatrana—at each of which places four pedigree bulls are stationed. The Government of India makes good use of the existing Pinjrapoles, which are being scientifically regulated for the better maintenance of their animal inhabitants; and gives grants to support better quality cows to increase the milk supply. There is a government dairy at Bhuj, and the number of veterinary hospitals has been increased to six. All this careful attention to one of Kutch's best economic assets promises well for the future.

A good deal of scope exists for the improvement of the breeds of sheep and goats, which together number about half a million animals. The country is well suited to sheep-raising,



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and new opportunities will offer themselves as the measures now being put in hand for the extension of pastureland become effective. The quality of Kutch wool has long been famous; and the shawls and blankets woven by the Rabaris—the shepherd community—command high prices from their artistic design and exquisite workmanship. The industry is still carried on along traditional lines; but it would repay thorough organization both from the standpoint of affording a variety of employment to many persons who could take part in it during all its stages, from the rearing of the sheep to the production of the finished woollen article; and from the point of view of building up a profitable trade in the high-quality shawls and blankets throughout the large market which India offers. A sheep-development farm is starting to encourage the best local breeds: and the first Five Year Plan made provision for the improvement of animal husbandry as applied both to sheep and goats. There is also a long-standing trade in tanned sheepskins and goatskins which could be further developed. Altogether, the future outlook for the pastoralists of Kutch is very hopeful, now that there are resources available for the organization and extension of their traditional activities.

As has already been pointed out, Kutchi agriculturalists are less fortunate, mainly because they are handicapped so severely by the erratic rainfall. The highest ambition of the Government is limited to raising the production of food crops until the area is self-sufficient; for even under the most favourable conditions, the State cannot hope to grow an exportable surplus of food in the foreseeable future. The main food crop is bajri (360,000 acres) followed by jowar (174,000 acres) with wheat (28,000 acres) a long way behind. The pulses (mung and math) occupy about 200,000 acres between them. Efforts are being made to introduce high-yielding strains and improved methods of cultivation, for all these crops; and the gradual extension of the irrigated area, as more tanks and storage dams come into operation, will increase both acreage and tonnage. It may well prove, however, that when once reasonable local self-suffi-

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ciency in food has been reached, the prospects for cash crops will prove far more attractive. Kutch soil grows excellent cotton in certain parts of the State, more especially in the districts of Mundra, Bhachau and Rapar. Although the crop now depends largely upon rainfall, the acreage tends to rise steadily and is now about 20,000 acres. There are already six factories for cotton ginning and pressing, and one spinning and weaving mill, to deal with the cotton crop; and the local industry shows steady signs of expansion, following the impetus afforded to it by the opening up of the Indian market when Kutch became a part of the Indian Union. Another crop with a considerable future appears to be oilseeds, which now occupy about 25,000 acres. The area devoted to sesamum and castor has multiplied more than five-fold in the last seven or eight years; but the most spectacular increase has been in groundnuts. This crop, although it still occupies only some 7,000 acres as compared with the 15,000 acres devoted to sesamum, had grown thirty-fold in area, and now yields more than 2,000 tons every year. A flourishing oil mill at Mandvi now processes more than 1,300 tons of oil seeds annually.

The traditional basis of Kutch's ancient prosperity has been her foreign trade, concerning which more will be said later. But there has always been a steady practice of the crafts for which the country has long been famous—textiles, jewellery, enamel work, embroidery, ivory-carving, knives, daggers, betelnut cutters, and (in former times) swords and shields. These articles commanded a considerable reputation in Africa, the Persian Gulf, and other countries with which Kutch had direct trade relations; but the fiscal policy pursued by the British Government of India from the beginning of the present century, and the steady refusal of Kutch to abandon her own independent tariff and to join the Indian Customs Union, deprived her of the natural market in India which alone could have sufficed to keep her craftsmen fully employed in their ancient skills. With the accession of Kutch to India in 1948 the tariff walls between the two have fallen, and there are now good



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prospects of reviving some of the ancient handicrafts on a modern commercial scale to meet the demand which would readily be forthcoming from the Indian market. Unfortunately the manufacture of some of the most famous luxury articles—and, in particular, of the rarer textiles and of the exquisite enamel work—has suffered greatly during the time when there was little demand for them: and it is only necessary to compare the embroidery and enamelled articles now to be purchased in Kutch, Anjar, or Mandvi with the embroidery, the buttons, the sword-hilts and the trinkets of earlier days, to appreciate the measure of the falling-off which has taken place both in design and in craftsmanship. Fortunately, the Indian Government appreciates the scope which exists for the revival of many of the traditional industries and for the starting of new ones, as a contribution to local prosperity: and is exerting itself actively to promote developments in these directions. As there are still some 2,300 small-scale industrial establishments, covering a very wide range of products from textiles to jewellery, a real foundation already exists for developing cottage and small-scale industrial activities on an effective scale.

If this programme can be carried through, it will do a great deal to restore prosperity to the larger villages and smaller towns; and there is now a new hope that it can be extended also to the countryside, although in what measure remains to be seen. The great Community Project movement, which has begun to transform rural life in many other parts of India, is now being applied to Kutch: and one block has been operating since 1952 in the Bhuj and Nakhatrana districts, covering an area of 540 square miles and a population of more than 85,000 people. Under the guidance and with the help of trained 'village level' workers assisted by technical experts in agriculture, animal husbandry, public health, education, child-welfare, nutrition, and the social services, the 118 villages in the block are being rapidly transformed both economically and physically. Better houses, better roads, better wells, better crops, better animals, and improved prospects of gainful employment



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through handicrafts and through the profitable use of the hours of idleness which the climate enforces upon the agriculturalist, are together altering for the better the whole life of the countryside. The five-year period of highly-intensive Community development is now drawing to a close; and the area will soon pass into the National Extension Service stage, when less money will be spent upon it—although quite sufficient to ensure that steady progress is maintained along the lines already laid down. A few figures give some idea of what has been done. There are seven hundred new compost pits: one hundred and twenty new wells and twelve small dams are irrigating six hundred acres of land: production has gone up by ten per cent. Six new primary schools have been opened: Government and private schools in the block¹ now total one hundred and one. There are eighteen night schools for adult education, and five new libraries. Much of the new construction has been done by the villagers themselves. There are eleven Government and private hospitals and dispensaries, and a mobile dispensary serves the more distant villages and keeps them in touch with medical aid. A revival of needlework and other crafts under expert direction and with the assistance of proper co-operative marketing arrangements is making good progress.

The ground has been prepared for a parallel development in Rapar district, on the extreme east of Kutch. Here there is a National Extension Service block, covering a hundred and fourteen villages, which was started in 1953. The population is comparatively scattered, amounting only to some 71,000 in an area of more than a thousand square miles. Its needs are considerable—there are only thirty-eight Government and private schools, two Government and private hospitals, and one travelling dispensary. But steady progress is being made in starting night schools for adult education: in setting up co-operative societies: and in encouraging committees to study village problems. Old wells are being repaired and new ones dug. Fertilizers, ploughs and other tools of improved design

¹ That is, a defined area set aside for C.P. or N.E.S. operations.



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are being distributed; oil engines are improving irrigation: one dam has been constructed and another is projected. There is a new feeling of hope and a keen desire for further progress.

The Nakhatrana-Bhuj Community project and the Rapar National Extension Service block are good examples of what can be done by the intensive development of previously existing facilities. There were already schools, hospitals, wells and dams; but money had been lacking to provide them in adequate numbers; and thus there had been no opportunity to plan the overall development of the area which they served. This is now being done; and as the Community Projects and the National Extension Service blocks spread gradually all over Kutch, the improvement in general living standards is likely to be considerable. But the foundation of the social services which are now being so greatly extended existed already when Kutch passed to the control of the Government of India.

Education is a case in point. Much primary and secondary education has always been free, not only in Government schools, but also in many of the large number of private schools which the merchant princes of Kutch, having made their fortunes abroad, have generously endowed in their native land. The former educational system in Kutch, in fact, compared quite favourably with that in many parts of India. Yet it stood in need of development in certain marked respects, not only because it suffered, like all the other social services, from a shortage of funds, in spite of the numerous private charities devoted to it: but also because, like so much else in Kutch, it had certain individual characteristics which were not always well-balanced. For example, it was to a large extent concentrated in the towns, made use of by the mercantile classes, and predominantly intended for males. Literacy among males, indeed, was reasonably high, even taking urban and rural conditions together, as compared with Gujarat and Saurashtra. But it was exceptionally low among females. The explanation is that many of the townsmen have been accustomed to go abroad, and education is a necessity for them; but the towns-

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women for the most part remain in Kutch, following domestic pursuits in which education plays little part. This has the curious consequence that Kutch is the only part of India where there are more women than men; and the proportion of women who are heads of households actually exceeds the proportion of the male population which occupies a corresponding position. The low percentage of female literacy can be a serious disadvantage in such circumstances: and since the time when the Government of India assumed the administration, there has been a sustained effort to provide improved facilities for the education of girls, who had been comparatively neglected by private benefactors. The annual increase in the number of girls receiving education, largely because of the amount of leeway to be made up, is proportionately greater than the increase in male pupils: and in the high school stage the entire expenditure has to be met from Government funds. Girls' primary education falls almost, though not quite, as heavily on official resources but in the middle school stage, there are private benefactions and fees which relieve the Government of all but one-fifth of the cost.

Since Kutch passed under the Government of India, there has been a sustained effort to extend education from the towns to the villages, and the greatest increase in educational institutions has been registered among village schools. There is certainly room for improvement here; for more than half the villages of the State—some five hundred of them—still have no access to schools at all. But progress has been steady; and while the educational institutions in the towns flourish exceedingly, the countryside is advancing also, as more and more money is spent on village education. Kutch has now an excellent Arts and Science College, which is accommodated in the City Palace in Bhuj by the permission of Maharao Madansinhji; a School of Art; a Teachers' Training College; a School of Agriculture; a School for the Blind. Altogether, there are eight High Schools, eleven Middle Schools and nearly three hundred Primary Schools in the State; together with schools for pro-

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professional and special education; three Nursery Schools; and thirteen libraries. The strong tradition of private benefactors in the Kutch educational system is evidenced by the fact that after eight years of intensive Government effort, there are 368 private educational institutions—of which 138 are recognized as conforming entirely to official standards and working to the official curriculum—as compared with 195 Government institutions.

The same tradition of private benevolence by wealthy and philanthropic citizens of Kutch is shown in the organization of medical relief. When the Government of India took over the administration, there was a Government Hospital in each one of the seven district headquarters; and some of them had been in existence for three-quarters of a century. In addition, there were about a dozen Government dispensaries and one or two maternity homes. But there were also some very important private institutions which administered medical relief—thirty-two dispensaries; a T.B. clinic; a T.B. sanatorium and two private hospitals. In addition, there were a number of benevolent foundations for the care of the aged and infirm. The Government of India thus found ready to hand a working system of medical relief, which could be improved and extended with relative ease. The new official efforts have been wisely directed towards two main activities: the extension of medical relief to remote rural areas by opening eleven new rural dispensaries, together with the institution of a steady campaign for the improvement of public health and sanitation. Great emphasis is now being laid upon infant welfare and mother-and-child clinics; and as the impact of the Community Project work and the National Extension Service activity increases, the standards of public health both in the urban and rural areas are likely to rise steadily. Further, the incorporation of Kutch into India is making available for work in Kutch the skilled personnel of the Indian Medical and Public Health services; so that in both Government and private institutions the facilities available to the general public are improving.



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It is against this background of steadily improving efficiency in the social services and of a determination to raise the conditions in Kutch to the level characteristic of the Welfare State, that the new and remarkable developments in Kutch's commercial importance must be viewed.

From what has been written in earlier pages, it will be clear to the reader that the people of Kutch possess a remarkably well-developed tradition of commercial enterprise, particularly in relation to trading overseas. Kutchi merchants have long established themselves in every seaport of India. They are to be found throughout the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf, in the ports of the Middle East, and, above all, perhaps, in the coastal towns of Zanzibar and East and West Africa. The fame of the Kutchi navigators, pilots, and seamen equalled the reputation of the merchant-venturers, whom they carried in their stout Kutchi craft across the oceans of Asia and Africa. The sea-going tradition of the Kutchi people no doubt explains why it is that Kutch has no fewer than five ancient ports—Mandvi, Mundra, Jakhau, Lakhpat and Koteshwa—all of which have a long history of overseas trade which spans the centuries. There is hardly another area in the world where port facilities have been so extensively developed in proportion to the population.

Besides these five ancient ports, there are a number of minor landing places along the southern and eastern shores of Kutch. The best known of them are Tuna, Rohar, Vavanya and Janghi, which for long served the high-walled and strongly fortified merchant city of Anjar, capital of the district of that name. But these minor depots are not much used to-day; many of them indeed are silting up, because, with the rise of the new port of Kandla, and the facilities brought by its modern equipment, there is little object in spending money upon keeping them clear. The trade of Anjar, for example, is now centred upon Kandla, to the exclusion of the four old depots, and is more prosperous than at any time within living memory. Sad to say, Anjar, which had suffered very badly in the great earth-



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quake of 1819, when more than a hundred lives were lost and about fifteen hundred houses were destroyed, was again stricken in 1956, at the very time when it was beginning anew to thrive mightily, with almost the same severity in loss of life and damage to property.

From very ancient times right up to the early years of the present century, the five main ports of Kutch have had a prosperous history, which is enshrined in their fortified walls and long jetties in hewn stone; in the palace-like houses of their merchants; in their numerous votive temples and in shrines commemorating the past prosperity of the pious. But the pattern of the trade by which they lived became interrupted as the British Government of India steadily raised the customs tariff of the sub-continent, partly for revenue purposes, and partly to safeguard by protective duties the growth of infant industries. The Maharaos of Kutch, resting upon their immemorial rights, and anxious to protect their subjects from the incidence of the new heavy duties levied in India, would not surrender their fiscal independence by joining the Indian Customs Union. From the standpoint of India, therefore, the ports of Kutch became foreign ports: and their trade, instead of serving a large hinterland in western India, diminished to the trickle which sufficed to satisfy the needs of Kutch itself and of a small re-export business of goods carried in Kutchi craft from Africa and Arabia and reshipped in bond to the Bombay market.

At one period they were threatened with the loss even of these poor remains of their former commercial importance by a scheme which the Government of Bombay put forward to connect Bombay to Karachi by a railway running through Kutch. This scheme, fortunately for Kutch, came to nothing: it would have ruined the State by annihilating the revenue from customs which was the main pillar of the Government's finances. Had the railway been planned to connect Kutch with the natural hinterland to the north, the people of Kutch, as well as their Ruler, would have welcomed the project with open



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arms, knowing that new markets would have been opened up and new vitality would have been conferred upon the Kutch ports. But the Indian Government, with a prudent eye upon its own interests, would not sanction a railway link between Kutch and Rajputana except upon the condition that Kutch joined the Indian Customs Union; and upon this obstacle the project broke down, only to be revived, and triumphantly completed, when Kutch became part of the Indian Republic.

During the half-century which preceded this event, the ports of Kutch fell into gradual decay. Their former prosperity largely deserted them. Fortunately they still remained the homes of many great Kutchi merchants whose names were household words in the commercial circles of Bombay, Calcutta, Karachi, Aden, Zanzibar and the Persian Gulf. Like all Kutchis, these merchant-venturers remained loyal to their ancestral homes: and the large sums of money which they remitted, and the employment which they secured for their fellow-townsmen, did something to keep alive the trade of the ancient ports. Nevertheless the population dwindled; the most enterprising of the younger men sought their fortunes elsewhere: houses were deserted for lack of occupants; and the general spectacle which met the visitor to their picturesque fortifications and deserted quays was that of a slowly-decaying community living nostalgically on the memories of former greatness.

Even Mandvi, the largest of them all, was scarcely an exception thirty years ago. As the main channel of communication between Kutch and the outside world, and as a regular calling point both of mail-steamers and of country-craft, it contrived to maintain some shadowy traces of its past greatness. But it was a mere ghost of its former self. To see the almost deserted shipyards, which in the days of Rao Godji (1760-1778) had built and kept in repair a fleet of four hundred vessels, including the famous ship which sailed to England and back (1760) was to wonder whether its ancient glories would ever return. Gone were the days when the Mandvi argosies



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brought bullion, dates, grain, timber, rhinoceros hides, cardamoms, pepper, ginger, silks, and drugs from Malabar, Mocha, Muscat and the African coast, taking in return the cotton, cloth, sugar, oil, butter and alum of Kutch and its hinterland, which extended into Sind, Jesalmer, Marwar and Gujarat; when the elephant tusks imported for the skilful ivory-carvers of Bhuj and Mandvi were sometimes so long that the bullock carts carrying them stuck in the narrow streets winding between the many-storied stone houses; when the rich merchant fleet-owners of Mandvi would climb the lofty tower near the lighthouse (still known as the Tower of Wagers) on the seaward fortifications, staking fortunes upon whose ship in the Suvali (African) fleet, which sailed in October and returned in May, would first be sighted, laden with eagerly-expected goods from Zanzibar. The decline in prosperity was not wholly due to a change in the pattern of trade caused by Indian fiscal policy: it was partly the fault of nature. Mandvi has a troublesome bar; and in spite of continual efforts by the Rulers of Kutch to improve the harbourage, it could not accommodate the larger and ever larger ships used in modern commerce.

A generation ago there were still many great houses in Mandvi, which it was the pride of wealthy merchants who had made fortunes in India, Arabia and Africa, to keep in good repair. The temple of Sundarvar, built by Rao Khengarji I when he founded the city in 1574, was well maintained; as were the temples of Rameshvar (erected about 1627 and restored after the earthquake of 1819 by the piety of a local merchant), of Lakshminarayan (1607) and the Haveli of Ranchodji Maharaj—the chosen resort of Bhatia traders seeking blessing upon a sharp bargain. The two mosques in Mandvi, the Kajivali, built in 1608, and the Jami, built in 1603, have always looked plain and unostentatious, for the local Muslim community are mostly fisher-folk without a great deal of money. But there are a number of Muslim shrines—all kept in good repair—the most notable being that of Pir Tamasa, which stands on a

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high sandhill about three miles outside Mandvi, and is a well-known landmark for navigators.

Among the buildings, inside the walls, the most notable was the Old Palace, built by Rao Lakhpāt (1741–1760) of white stone in European fashion. It is decorated with carvings of dancing girls, tigers, and roistering Dutchmen, complete with bottle and drinking cup (according to the invariable practice of the Rao's architect and scientific adviser, Ram Singh, who had lived in Holland). Until his death in 1942, it was the favourite residence of Maharao Khengarji III, who refused to sleep anywhere else when visiting Mandvi; and the beautiful outlook seawards from the broad roof, cool in the height of summer, makes his habit understandable. Wealthy people from other parts of Kutch often kept houses at Mandvi for the sake of the climate, which is temperate in the hot weather, when compared with the climate of the interior: so long as there was a British Political Agent in Bhuj, there was a pleasant summer bungalow for him in Mandvi, which has been very well kept up even after the British ceased to use it. It was the climate of Mandvi, and the great natural beauty of the sands and sea-shore, which attracted Maharao Vijayarajji (1942–1948) so that even before he succeeded Maharao Khengarji III, his father, he built for himself a modern palace, Vijay Vilas, which stands some miles to the west of the town in the midst of delightful gardens and carefully-fostered trees. It is still used by Maharao Madansinhji, who retained it for his family when much other ancestral property passed to the Government of India.

He occupies it occasionally when he happens to return to Kutch at the right season: but Mandvi is not really healthy—except perhaps for people born and bred there—in all the months of the year. As a health-resort or as a place for convalescence it has marked limitations. The many tombs in the lonely European cemetery—deserted a hundred years ago and more, but still reverently preserved from desecration—which is set in the bare dunes and sandhills to the east of Mandvi creek, tell of young British lives cut off in their early twenties,



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or even in their 'teens. Here they lie for ever: cornets and ensigns of John Company's forces or of King's regiments lent for duty in India; junior officers of the medical and political departments; captains, stricken with disease in the course of duty, who vainly hoped for restoration to health. Some brought their families with them; there are the gravestones set up by sorrowful husbands to the memory of the cherished young wives who left them lonely. Most pathetic of all are the tombs of their little children. On one of these, the death of twin infants is recorded in heartbroken lines, cut so deeply that they are still legible after a century and a half of battering from the flying spindrift and blowing sand of the desolate dunes:

In some rude spot where vulgar herbage grows,
If chance a violet rear its purple head,
The careful gard'ner moves it ere it bloom
To thrive and flourish in a nobler bed.
Such was their fate, dear babes:
Their opening such
Pre-eminence in early bloom was shown,
For earth too good, perhaps,
And loved too much.
Heaven saw, and marked them for its own.

There are now no British in Mandvi; but the work which these men did for Kutch, as for India, is not forgotten. Upon the foundations which they laid long ago, often at the cost of great personal sacrifice and tragic bereavement, the structure of order, discipline and devotion to duty which mark the public services of the new India has grown up. Without them, and their like, moreover, there would have been no India, such as we know it to-day, to bring fresh hope for the future to Mandvi.

The entry of Kutch into the Indian Customs Union, which followed the accession of the State to India, has brought some new elements into the ancient pattern of Mandvi's trade. Passenger-traffic between Mandvi and Bombay and Mandvi



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and Okha in Kathiawad has increased; some three thousand 'country-craft' visit Mandvi every year; the shipyards are busy with Government as well as with private orders; money has been spent on the improvement of port facilities and there are plans for fresh developments which are expected to increase the flow of commercial traffic already valued at nearly two million pounds a year. The seafaring community finds plenty of employment: the shipwrights find that they can build modern launches as successfully as their forbears built the six traditional types of deep-sea trading vessels. Trade is certainly increasing, and there is little sign of stagnation. Schools are more numerous; medical aid has been more widely extended; ancient ways of fishing are being supplemented by modern methods and by improved equipment. Maharao Madansinhji has made over the old City Palace as a free gift for educational work; it is now the home of one of the best and most progressive girls' schools in all western India.

A long way behind Mandvi is another ancient port, Mundra, capital of Mundra district, which lies some miles to the east, about half way along the coast to Anjar. Mundra is impressive from the outside: its high, fortified stone wall was built early in the eighteenth century out of massive blocks taken from the vast ruins of the sacred Jain city of Bhadreswar, not far away. Unlike Mandvi, Mundra has no open seaboard; and the 'country-craft' which use it have to make their way along channels cut in a muddy swamp. A good deal of trouble and expense is required to keep these channels open, but there is still a considerable trade between Mundra and the coast of Saurashtra in salt, wool, skins and other commodities which can be carried easily and cheaply from Mundra district across the Gulf of Kutch in small craft. Moreover, off the Mundra seaboard there is some of the best fishing anywhere in these waters; and Mundra fish finds a ready market in many parts of Kutch now that it can be transported quickly by jeep or by lorry. Improved communications have brought a better livelihood to the Mundra fishermen and Government loans and instruction in



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improved techniques are helping them to profit by an expanding market.

Mundra, and the even smaller ports of Jakhao, Lakhpatt and Koteswar, which lie to the west of Mandvi, give a good deal of local employment, and still have a useful, if minor, part to play in the economic life of Kutch. But it is unlikely that much money could usefully be spent upon them, because the facilities which they offer are meagre, and the districts which they serve provide just enough trade to keep them in existence. Mandvi falls into a different category; it is already classified as an 'intermediate'—that is, half-way between a major and a minor—port, and it is likely to continue to be in the future, as it has been in the past, a great centre for 'country-craft' which ply along the coasts of Saurashtra and Malabar. It will be a long time before 'country-craft' are superseded as an economical means of transport for small quantities of goods and for passengers taking short journeys by sea between local ports; and the revival already noticed, of Mandvi's ancient ship-building industry with Government encouragement is a pointer to the probable activities of the port in the future. For it seems certain that Mandvi is destined to lose much, at least, of its present importance for ocean-going cargo steamers, and even for passenger traffic, to the great deep-water port of Kandla, now being rapidly developed by the Government of India.

To visit Kandla to-day is to be brought into contact with planning and with execution on a scale which Kutch has never seen before in its long history. The Government of India is determined to make Kandla the sixth major port in all India, and to equip it with every facility to serve a hinterland of nearly thirty-thousand square miles in north Gujarat, Rajasthan, Delhi, East Punjab and West Uttar Pradesh, with a population of forty-five millions, which can no longer be reached from Karachi. Thousands of workmen, under the direction of Indian, German, American and British experts, have been busy for some years in converting the original blueprints of the planners into the tangible shapes of cargo berths, transit sheds,



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warehouses, oil berths, passenger-piers and the like. Cranes, mechanical equipment, approach roads, staff quarters, rail connections, oil storage tanks, installations for water and electricity, combine to create the impression of rapid progress made possible by ungrudging expenditure. The cost of the whole project will be about £10½ millions; it is designed to handle more than a million and a half tons of cargo every year, and it is now almost completed. The separate oil port is already working: half a million tons of oil are being pumped through twelve-inch pipes five miles long which lead to installations built by three oil companies. The main jetty is 2,800 feet long, and is supported by reinforced concrete hollow piles, which are manufactured on the spot. More than 15,000 of them have been used to provide the necessary foundations for the great warehouses and transit sheds, which are equipped with the latest type of mobile cranes, fork-lifts, and service bridges to mechanize and speed up the handling of cargo. There is an extensive network of railway sidings and concrete roads to ease communications between the different sections of the port and between the port and the goods and passenger station at the nearby town of Gandhidham, where many of the workers live.

The contrast between Kandla and Gandhidham on the one hand, and the rest of Kutch on the other, is almost startling in its intensity. Here, on the eastern side of the island state, everything is new, planned, up-to-date. The tempo of life is that of the aircraft and automobile age, as seen in Bombay, Calcutta, or any other great modern city—with the added feature of a scientifically planned layout which looks far into the future. The ancient easy-going way of life, with its picturesqueness; its links with the past; keyed as it were to the stride of the camel and the amble of the bullock, which still prevails even in such places as Mandvi and Bhuj, finds no room in Kandla and Gandhidham, which are busy hives of industrial planning and commercial enterprise; where everything is strenuous, hustling, neon-lighted and cosmopolitan. Yet, like almost everything



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in Kutch, the beginnings of both antedate the new regime.

The credit for founding Kandla belongs to Maharao Khengarji III. He was deeply concerned at the difficulty of finding suitable facilities for modern shipping at Mandvi; and it occurred to him that Kandla Creek, with its well-defined banks, with deep water close to the shore, and ample depth for ocean-going ships, offered possibilities which were well worth exploring. Unlike Mandvi, a port on Kandla creek would be sheltered from the south-west monsoon; and would have the further advantage of being quite close to the mainland of India. Communications with Saurashtra, he thought, would be possible for passengers by travelling through the creeks, without traversing the open sea at all; while for goods traffic, a comparatively short rail-link to Deesa would give any port on the Kandla creek a considerable advantage, even over Bombay, for the trade of Rajputana.

Like so many pioneers, Maharao Khengarji III was exposed to some criticism and even to attack from those who could not see so far ahead as he could. Kandla creek was a deserted spot, cut off by salt-marshes from any inhabited area. A fine place to set a port! Yet the old Maharao—who had already been on the throne for half-a-century—remained true to his vision. Tirelessly he explored the banks of the creek from end to end, tramping through the salt-marshes and among the mangroves; spending days, even weeks, on horseback and on riding camels. At the cost of immense personal exertion, he found some sites which seemed suitable. He took the best expert advice and he engaged the services of a British port-engineer. Gradually there grew up, first a small settlement for the workmen, then a small landing stage, then a customs office and a warehouse or two. Fresh water was found: a piped supply was led from the Viri springs to the new port. Everything had perforce to be planned on a small scale; the Maharao's resources were strained to the limit even to effect these modest beginnings. His hopes for a large expansion of trade remained unrealized, because the railway link with the Indian mainland, of which Kandla Port



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was built to become the outlet and terminus, could not be constructed—Kutch's determination to stand outside the Indian Customs Union proved an insuperable obstacle. Yet even within Maharao Khengarji's lifetime, his choice was vindicated as far-sighted and correct. Between 1930, when his small port came into operation, and 1940, Kandla was visited by some seven hundred large, ocean-going steamers. To-day, his original jetty forms the core of the new oil port, an essential part of the new layout of India's sixth major harbour.

With the partition of the sub-continent between India and Pakistan, and the removal of Karachi from its former position as the main port for Rajputana, the eastern districts of the Punjab, and much of Uttar Pradesh, the potential importance of Kandla became plain. The Government of India found it essential to discover some new port, north and west of Bombay, to cover the territory under their jurisdiction which Karachi had once served; first in order to avoid the long and expensive railway haul from Bombay; and next, to relieve the congestion which from time to time threatened to immobilize that great harbour for days or even weeks at a stretch. Delhi therefore appointed in 1948 a West Coast Major Port Development Committee, to examine the facilities, natural and artificial, of Saurashtra and Kutch, and to make recommendations about where the new major port should be located.

Needless to say, there was tremendous competition between all the Saurashtra maritime states to secure a favourable verdict from the committee. Morvi, Nawanagar, Baroda, Junagadh, Bownagar, all pressed their claims. Yet the natural advantages of Kandla heavily outweighed all that its rivals could offer, in spite of the much larger sums of money which some of the wealthy Kathiawad princes had been able to spend upon developing their particular harbours. Even so, the choice was not so easy as it might appear to the visitor to Kandla to-day: for in 1948 it took the eye of faith to see the potentialities of the little port which Maharao Khengarji had constructed.

With its modest buildings rising out of an apparently



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deserted landscape ringed by the surrounding salt-marshes, cut off from the larger centres of population by poor communications, which would be costly to improve, Kandla might well have seemed an unpromising choice.

But the members of the committee knew what they were doing; and at the very moment when they might have hesitated, Kandla's one obvious deficiency—the lack of any considerable centre of population in its immediate vicinity—was in process of being made good through one of the strange accidents of migration which followed the partition of the sub-continent between India and Pakistan.

During the whole of that tragic six months of communal violence and massacre, of calculated exterminations and of frantic revenges, which burdened both India and Pakistan with millions upon millions of panic-stricken refugees, Kutch remained a haven of quiet, where Hindus and Muslims lived and worked together in complete concord. Not one single act of communal violence occurred. The Maharao's peace, respected alike by his Hindu and by his Muslim subjects, and based upon the Ruling House's centuries-long identification with the protection and support of both religions, remained wholly unbroken. As had happened so often before in the history of Kutch, the island state once again became a refuge for the persecuted: there was an influx both of Hindus and Muslims from areas where they found themselves unwelcome.

Among these refugees were many from Sind. Under the leadership of Bhai Pratap, a man of outstanding vision and organizing ability, a number of prominent Sindhis formed themselves into a limited company, entitled the Sindhi Resettlement Corporation, with the object of building up a new life for themselves upon Kutch soil. They were not willing to be scattered in parcels among the existing towns and villages: their aim was to found a new, up-to-date city, with zoned areas for industry, commerce, shipping, and residence, and with all the provisions for public amenities and for medical, educational and other social services which modern town-



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planning postulates. They sought the blessing of Mahatma Gandhi upon their enterprise. Delighted with the spirit of enlightened self-help which they were displaying, he permitted them to call the new settlement after his name. At the same time, an approach was made to Prince Madansinhji, then in charge of the State on behalf of his father, Maharao Vijayarajji, who was away from India. After satisfying himself of the soundness of the project Maharao Vijayarajji made a free gift to the new settlement of a large tract of land, sufficient for all their needs, in the immediate vicinity of Kandla Port. This was exactly the kind of situation which the refugees from Sind were seeking. They accepted the Maharao's offer with gratitude; but they made it plain that their enterprise could only succeed in fulfilling the designs which they had formed for its future if Kandla were declared a major port. While the decision of the West Coast Major Port Development Committee was still an open question, Bhai Pratap and his colleagues approached the committee; they explained what they were hoping to do; and they proved that they could supply Kandla with the one thing which it still lacked to satisfy all the requirements which the Government of India expected to find in a new major port—namely, a flourishing and progressive township in the immediate vicinity. How far these representations in fact swayed the committee's final judgment is uncertain: what is clear is that the Sindhi Resettlement Corporation helped a good deal in the negotiations which resulted in the selection of Kandla and in the adoption of impressive plans for its development. Maharao Vijayarajji died prematurely before these negotiations were finished, but his eldest son and successor, Maharao Madansinhji, took up the thread anew. He discussed the plans of the new settlement with Mahatma Gandhi; he enlarged the gift of land; he took an active part in arranging for the reception, accommodation, and rehabilitation of the refugees. It is appropriate that two of the impressive new avenues which dignify the town should have been named after the two Maharaos who did so much to bring it into existence.



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The township collectively called Gandhidham consists in effect of three main settlements: Adipur or 'original town'; Sardargunj (to preserve the memory of Sardar V. J. Patel, the great Minister who secured the accession of the Indian States to the new Government of India) and Gopalpuri (named after the late Sir Gopalaswamy Ayyengar, who, as Minister of States, took a keen interest both in Gandhidham and Kandla). An excellent system of public transport links up all three, and provides for corporate life; while each settlement has its own shopping centre, its own primary schools, its dispensary, and other purely local facilities. All three settlements share in two high schools, several hospitals, a vocational training centre, a commercial institute, a co-operative bank and other institutions designed to serve the township as a whole. Thanks to ample space, the planning of the entire area is that of a garden city, with wide roads, tree-lined avenues and well-built houses standing in their own gardens. Plenty of water is available, brought by mains from the Viri springs (which Maharao Khengarji first connected with Kandla) and the Shinai Lake. It is piped to individual houses: it keeps trees, lawns and flowers alive. But as the needs of Gandhidham grow, fresh sources must be tapped and arrangements are in hand to obtain additional supplies from Khedvi and Khambra. Public gardens, a club, and cinemas, besides bookshops and libraries, provide plenty of amenities.

In addition to the commercial activities connected with the supply of consumer goods to the inhabitants of Gandhidham and of Kandla Port (who now number over 20,000), the township has become the home of a number of light industries: tile-making; furniture making; woodworking (there are four sawmills); cement making, including the manufacture of blocks and Hume pipes; metal work—buckets and steel trunks. There are two handloom weaving establishments and an ice factory. Moreover, like Kandla Port, Gandhidham has a rail connection with India. In the new railway station passengers can go to and from Rajputana, Central India, and other parts



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of the country where the metre-gauge system runs. Before long, as we have noticed, Gandhidham will have its own airport on a site already earmarked for the purpose in the original layout. This will relegate the present small airport at Bhuj to a position of secondary importance, as the new airport will serve the large area of India which now lacks the former facilities provided by Karachi airport. It seems clear that as Kandla Port and Gandhidham get into their stride, the entire economic centre of gravity of the State will shift eastwards.

All present indications seem, indeed, to point that way. The close links which are now developing between Kandla-Gandhidham and Ahmedabad, thanks to air transport, the railway and the new National Highway, are likely to bring much Gujarati business enterprise and financial investment to an area which is designed to become *par excellence* the port for an extensive hinterland in which Gujarat bulks largely. While no one in Kutch expects that Gujarati 'big business' will desert Bombay, where it has long been so firmly established, it is clear that recent outbreaks of bad feeling between Gujaratis and Maharashtrians, coupled with Gujarati disappointment at the recent decision against a separate linguistic State of 'Greater Gujarat', are inclining some at least of the great mercantile establishments of Ahmedabad and of other business centres in Gujarat to consider very seriously the possibility of opening up activities in Kandla and Gandhidham, where there are admirable facilities, a clear field for new enterprises and all the other advantages offered by a young and rapidly-growing community. In this connection it is not without significance that near Kandla is already located the largest salt works in all Asia, with an export trade of many thousands of tons annually to countries in many parts of the world. This combination of Kutch's own natural resources with the capital and business enterprise of a group of great Gujarati merchants has been startlingly successful. It may prove to be only the first of a series of large-scale undertakings which the facilities provided by the new port of Kandla for handling and shipping large quantities



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of goods quickly and cheaply will call into being. Clearly, the development of Kandla to its full capacity will bring with it a considerable modification in the present trade-pattern of India, both by relieving Bombay of some of its congestion and by providing a cheaper, shorter and quicker route to a large area which Bombay can serve at present only uneconomically and at considerable cost in extra freight-charges, inevitable delays, and overcrowded warehouses.

In short, the incorporation of Kutch in India, while it has brought many advantages to Kutch, is proving by no means one-sided in its benefits. If Kutch is gaining much for herself, she is also contributing much to the resources of the new India with which her destinies are hence forward inextricably linked.

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THE RIDDLE OF THE RANN

THE traditional detachment which has been characteristic of the State of Kutch for the last nine hundred years seems destined to rank in the judgment of future historians as a kind of interlude between two epochs of close connection with the mainland. The key-factor has been the condition of the Rann. In ancient times, when the Rann was an arm of the Arabian Sea, Kutch was an island, easily to be reached from what is now Sind, and forming a kind of Adam's Bridge between Sind and Kathiawad. How long Kutch remained a true island, entirely surrounded by the sea, can only be guessed; but its function as a bridge linking Sind and the west coast of India may have lasted into the dawn of history. Some traces of the remarkable Indus Valley civilization (perhaps 2800 to 2200 BC) have been found in Kutch; and it is probably through Kutch that this civilization penetrated into Kathiawad and western India. Microlithic finds in Kutch, moreover, bear obvious analogies to those found on the mainland on either side.

When Alexander the Great reached those parts in 325 BC the Rann was no longer an arm of the sea. The eastern branch of the Indus—then the most important channel—emptied itself into the Rann, so that Kutch was a kind of extension of Sind on the other side of a large freshwater lake, easily to be crossed. During the whole of this period, which lasted until 1000 AD the con-



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nection between Kutch and Sind was intimate. It was from Sind that the ancestors of the present Ruling House hailed. At the same time, the connection between Kutch and Kathiawad was also close; and rival princes and peoples from Sind and from Saurashtra contended fiercely for the mastery in the island territory which formed a natural link between them. But some time in the eleventh or twelfth century, the main body of the Indus water began to move from the eastern to the western branch; the freshwater lagoon dried up, and salt water began to seep into its place. This was no doubt the result of seismic disturbance. Earthquake shocks are a recurring phenomenon in Kutch history; they were generally attributed—at least, those sufficiently powerful to destroy cities or to alter the terrain appreciably—to the supernatural power of the sages and saints of which Kutch generally enjoyed something more than its fair share. The Rann became a saline, marshy plain, flooded during the monsoon months, and at all times of the year difficult, and often dangerous, to cross. This character it has broadly maintained until our own times, when the development of modern means of communication are once again linking Kutch closely to the Indian mainland.

It may well happen that in the future the resources of present-day engineering science will be needed to keep open these means of communication, because there can still be no certainty that the Rann will remain just as it is. Following the great earthquake of 1819, the western portion of the Rann, which had been drying up round the Kori, or eastern branch of the Indus, sank twelve feet or more: and an area of two thousand square miles of what had been marsh became an inland sea. The great depression thus formed, which engulfed the ancient fortress of Sindri, was filled, in succeeding years, with fresh or with salt water according to the vagaries of the Indus floods. Like the rest of the Rann, it is now mainly salt-marsh. But another violent earth tremor, of the magnitude of that which damaged Anjar so severely in July 1956, might at any time alter the terrain of the Rann once more. Fortunately the eastern



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tracts of the Rann, which are the most important from the point of view of communications with India, seem less liable to change than the western tracts—except, of course, by some enormous natural catastrophe; and such minor alterations as may occur are unlikely to cause much difficulty to modern engineers. One stabilizing factor in the present situation is the gradual mastering of the Indus floods, which can now usually be controlled and utilized for irrigation projects in Pakistan; although in an exceptional year it may still be possible for them to sweep devastatingly into the Rann. But on the whole, if the incalculable element of earthquakes is excluded from calculation, the prospects for stabilizing the eastern side of the Rann (the level of which is steadily rising) as a bridge between Kutch and India seem favourable: and it may even prove possible to reclaim certain tracts for grazing or cultivation.

It is with this intermediate period of Kutch's history—the period when the characteristic culture of the country was developed in comparative detachment from the mainland—that the pages which follow are mainly concerned. During that period the heroic legends of Kutchi chivalry took shape; the great monastic foundations were set up; the traditions of seafaring and of far-flung mercantile enterprise were firmly established. It was then that the distinctive contribution which Kutch brings to the new India was evolved. About the new epoch which the present close connection with India has ushered in, little can be written. It lies in the future. Again, of the enormously long earlier period of close connection with the mainland, up to about AD 1000, only the bare outline can be recovered until the researches of the archaeologists fill in the existing gaps in historical knowledge. Nevertheless, enough evidence is available to show how closely Kutch was connected for many centuries with the fortunes of the mainland.

It would hardly be an exaggeration, indeed, to say that during most of the age of prehistory, throughout the dawn of history, and right into mediaeval times, Kutch had no separate existence: it was regarded as part of the dominions of whatever dynasty or



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race chanced to rule over the lands now known as Sind and Gujarat, and proved itself powerful enough from one base or the other to control the island state lying between them. In the traditional history preserved in the Puranas, Kutch figures among the possessions of the Yadavas, who overthrew the (apparently aboriginal and certainly non-Aryan) Rakshasas in Gujarat and Saurashtra. There is a persistent tradition in the scanty early Hindu references that Kutch was thinly populated and rather uncivilized; but grew excellent grass (thanks to ash-manure resulting from fire from Heaven, called down by an angry sage, who lost his way, upon the rough jungle that impeded him) which supplied a number of pastoral tribes. Whether these came from Sind or Gujarat, or were natives of the soil, is uncertain; but there could have been little resistance on their part to any powerful conqueror from the mainland. Local tradition, beyond proclaiming the descent of the Ruling House from Yadu, founder of the Yadavas, is silent about this obscure period; and there is no evidence of any large city or town in Kutch corresponding to the Indus valley civilization; although, as already mentioned, traces of contact with this culture have been found. Until the archaeology of Kutch is further explored, conjecture must be the only guide.

With its excellent natural harbours, Kutch was almost certainly a useful adjunct to the Indus Valley province, annexed by Darius the son of Hystaspes (521-485 BC) as the twentieth satrapy of the Persian Empire: indeed without the occupation of Kutch the Indus delta of that period could not have been effectively controlled by the Persian fleet under Skylax. But whether there was any settlement of Persian officers and merchants in Kutch, and whether at this period the harbours of Kutch began to take part in the flourishing trade which sprang up with the Persian Gulf and the coast of Arabia cannot be determined. By the time that Alexander the Great reached the mouth of the Indus from the Punjab (325 BC) a large number of local kingdoms had grown up along the seaboard of Sind, Kathiawad and Gujarat; the pattern of trade between



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them and other parts of India, and between them and the lands to the west, seems to have been flourishing. There is no evidence to be found either in the Greek writers or in Kautilya that Kutch was a separate kingdom; but it no doubt shared in the prosperity of Gujarat under the Mauryan Empire after it had submitted to the rule of Chandragupta Maurya about 300 BC. No Asoka inscriptions have been found in Kutch; but it is unlikely in the extreme that the island remained outside the sway of the great Buddhist Emperor, whose dominions, extending from the Hindu Kush to Mysore, included Gujarat, Kathiawad, and the whole of the former Persian satrapy of Sind, which had been ceded by Seleukos Nikator.

When the Mauryan Empire broke up, Gujarat, Kutch and Sind passed under the rule of Greeks from Bactria, who were being driven out by hordes of semi-nomadic Sakas or Scythians (about 140–120 BC)—the Sakas themselves having been set in motion by another tribe of formidable nomads, the Yueh-chi. Greco-Bactrian rule was civilized and enlightened, depending on a fusion of eastern and western cultures. Kutch had become part of the empire of the famous Greek King Menander, who invaded India about 175 BC, conquering among other places the Indus delta and Kathiawad; and a certain amount of colonization, accompanied by building activity and commercial development, seems to have taken place in his reign. It is about this time that we first come upon references to definite settlements in Kutch: the ruins of Bactrian temples, altars, fortified camps and large masonry wells were observed by Strabo (66 BC—AD 24) who refers to Kutch as Tejarashtra, with Tej or Tahij as its principal town. It is to be noticed that more than fifteen hundred years later, in 1582, Abul Fazl called the capital of Kutch by this name; so that Tej may be identical in site with Bhuj. There is a tradition that at one remote period, perhaps under the Bactrians, Tej was the most important place between the Indus and Daman; but when this occurred, if it really did occur, is uncertain.

Bactrian rule over Gujarat, Kathiawad, and Kutch was ended



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by the invasion of those regions by the Sakas, who set up, early in the first century of the Christian era, the famous dynasties of Great Satraps who ruled in Malwa and Kathiawad for three centuries in spite of many vicissitudes. It is not clear whose Satraps or Viceroys they claimed to be; but possibly they were tributaries of the Kushan Empire. There were heroic struggles against these invaders, and the name of Vikramaditya, the Indian King Arthur, who is commemorated in the Vikrama Samvat era, beginning in 58 BC is associated with these campaigns of patriotic resistance. There is a tradition, recorded in *Ras Mala*, that Kutch suffered very severely from raiders who carried off women, children, cows, grain, and property of all kinds. How long these disturbances lasted is unknown. The Saka Satraps gradually consolidated their hold upon the country, although Nahapana (known dates between AD 119 and 125) was crushed by Gautamiputra Satarkarmi, of the famous Andhra dynasty of the Satavahanas. However, a different line of Satraps came to the rescue of the Saka power. The great Rudradaman drove the Satavahanas from Gujarat and Kathiawad, and as his famous inscription of AD 150 at Girnar (where he repaired the embankment of the Sirdarsana lake) shows, extended his conquests through Kutch and into Sind, where he probably defeated local Parthian chiefs, relics of the reoccupation of the former twentieth satrapy of the Persian Empire by King Mithridates I of Parthia in the middle of the second century BC. These Parthian chiefs may possibly have ruled over Kutch when Satrap Nahapana was defeated: many Indo-Parthian coins have been discovered in Kutch—although these may be evidence of the close trading relations between Kutch and Sind rather than of any direct Parthian rule. However this may be, Rudradaman brought Kutch under Saka dominion conclusively, and as time went on, Kutch's ties with Saurashtra became closer than its ties with Sind.

The new master of Kutch was by any reckoning an extremely civilized person as well as a mighty warrior. He prided himself on his knowledge of Sanskrit (the Girnar record is the earliest



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lengthy official inscription in that language to be discovered) and of the classical subjects of grammar, music, logic and statecraft. But even more interesting is the fact that he carefully recorded his success in winning the hands of several Indian princesses, who chose him out of other suitors by the ancient *Swayamvara*, or 'bride's choice' ceremony. Like the Greeks and the Parthians, like the Huns and Gurjaras who arrived later, the Saka aristocracy sought marriage alliances with the Kshattriya ruling houses of India; and from this mixture of warrior stocks, many of the great Rajput clans emerged.

The rule of the Great Satraps over Kutch seems to have held firm for more than a century after Rudradaman's death; but nothing is known about how the country was administered or what its social organization was like. The evidence of coins shows that there was a good deal of trade, which might argue the existence of merchants, shipping, and town life, and presumably, of arrangements for levying customs-duties for the benefit of the Great Satraps; but nothing is known of any particular towns, or even of forts; and Tej (or Bhuj) is not mentioned. The island-situation of Kutch may have preserved it from troubles which overtook Saka rule on the mainland from the end of the second century AD. Civil wars broke out: fresh and formidable attacks were launched against the Great Satraps by the Satavahanas: separate Saka chieftains set up independent kingdoms. The power of the Sakas slowly crumbled; and their prestige waned as that of the Gupta Empire of Magadha steadily grew from the beginning of the fourth century AD. The Great Satraps were obliged to pay tribute to the military might of Samudragupta (died about AD 380) and fell easy victims to his equally distinguished son Chandragupta II Vikramaditya who finally brought Saka rule in Gujarat, Kathiawad and Kutch to an end about AD 395. The reason for this invasion of a tributary kingdom was no doubt the attraction of the revenue from customs duties levied upon the active trading with the west which was carried on in the ports of all three areas. But it is also as well to remember that Chandrag-



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upta II (if his identification with the King Chandra in the inscription on the famous Iron Pillar at Delhi is accepted as correct) was faced by opposition from the 'Vahlikas' of Sind; and in making his plans to 'cross in warfare the seven mouths of the Indus' to subdue them, he would have found it essential to control Saurashtra and Kutch. No doubt both these considerations helped to seal the fate of the Saka Satraps.

The Gupta Empire was enlightened and efficient, and it is reasonable to suppose that Kutch prospered under the kind of benevolent administration which the Chinese pilgrim Fa-hien, who travelled through many parts of India between AD 399 and AD 414, described incidentally in relating the progress of his pious quest for authentic Buddhist texts. Officials were regularly paid; commerce flourished; caste restrictions were enforced; cows were protected; order was well maintained and many excellent handicrafts were practised. How far this general picture of ordered prosperity applied to contemporary Kutch can only be conjectured; but since there is still no evidence of the emergence of a local government, it may be assumed that the country was administered by imperial officials. If those who served in Kutch were as good as their colleagues who impressed Fa-hien so favourably in the course of his travels through other parts of the Gupta Empire, the local conditions must have been highly satisfactory. It seems likely that Kutch was in the jurisdiction of the Imperial Governor of Saurashtra during this period; and the efficiency of the administration in looking after the welfare of the people is shown by another inscription at Girnar. Since the Saka Rudradaman I repaired the embankment of the Sudarsana lake in AD 150 it had seemingly held firm; but in AD 455-56 it burst again. It was promptly mended by the Imperial Governor, whose name was Parnadatta, on the instructions of the Emperor.

Unfortunately for Kutch, as for the rest of India, the golden age of the Guptas was destined to last in its full splendour only for about a century after the second Girnar inscription. In the time of Chandragupta II's son, Kumaragupta (died AD 455)



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there had occurred a formidable military crisis. Whether it was due to invasion from without or to sedition within is unknown; but the fortunes of the dynasty suffered so severely that they could be described as 'fallen' in a contemporary inscription, which records how they were suddenly restored by the victories of Skandagupta, the crown prince. In the course of his reign, the Emperor Skandagupta had been obliged to repel a formidable invasion from the Ephthalites, or White Huns, a branch of the terrible Hun peoples who were then overrunning so much of Asia and Europe. He defeated them so thoroughly that they kept away for half a century. But this great victory, which for the time saved India from the fate which was then overtaking much of the known world, must have strained the resources of the Gupta Empire severely; and under the heroic Emperor's successors, there were signs that the effectiveness of the central authority was declining. From the point of view of Kutch, the most important consequences of this decline were twofold. One was the establishment in Kathiawad, some time just before AD 500, of a separate kingdom, under the Maitraka clan, with its capital at Valabhi (now Vala in what was formerly Bhavnagar State). The founder of this kingdom was Bhatarka, an Imperial General who became Governor, made his office hereditary, and then started a dynasty of feudal chiefs which subsequently attained great eminence, ruling Saurashtra and, for some time, parts of Malwa and Gujarat, as well as Kutch. The second consequence, from the standpoint of Kutch, of the decline of Gupta power was the growth of a powerful kingdom in Sind. The King of Sind was attacked by the mighty Harsha of Kanauj (AD 606-47), but apparently beat him off; and the State of Sindhu, as it was called, remained powerful throughout the seventh century AD.

Valabhi was strong enough, not only to protect its dominions from many of the troubles which accompanied the break up of the Gupta Empire and the short-lived tyranny of the Hun conquerors, but also, after some initial setbacks, to resist the attacks of Harsha. Its power seems to have lasted until it was



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weakened by Arab raids between AD 725 and AD 735 and it was finally destroyed by internal rebellion. In its heyday the administration was highly organized; and much admired by the Chinese traveller Hiuen-tsang, who visited many parts of India between AD 630 and AD 644.

It is not always easy to identify the Chinese form of the place-names which he gives; but he seems to classify Kutch as part of the kingdom of Sindhu. True, there is another passage in his travels in which he describes a place called K-i-ta or Ki-c'ha as being subject to Valabhi; but since this place was in his time rich, thickly-peopled, and like Malwa in climate and customs, it is perhaps the Kaira district rather than Kutch. The best reasons for believing that Hiuen-tsang is referring to Kutch in the former, rather than in the latter, passage are his descriptions of the distance which he travelled to reach it, which was 267 miles south-west of the capital of Sindhu, Alor (near Bhakar on the Indus); and the name of its chief town, which is plainly identifiable with Koteshtar, not far from Lakhpat. Exactly when Kutch passed from the suzerainty of Valabhi to that of Alor is unknown. Hiuen-tsang gives no hint that Sindhu had occupied it shortly before his visit; so it seems probable that Valabhi power over Kutch lasted less than a hundred years; and that towards the end of the sixth century the great conqueror King Sahiras of Sindhu, whose territory extended to the north as far as the borders of Kashmir, and on the west as far as Mekran, found Kutch an easy conquest.

Hiuen-tsang described Koteshtar as lying 'on the western frontier of the country close to the river Indus and great ocean. It measured five miles round; it contained eighty Buddhist convents, whose five thousand devotees belonged mainly to the Little Vehicle'. He also noticed a dozen temples dedicated to Hindu deities; and a great temple of Maheshwar, adorned with sculptures, where there was a miracle-working image worshipped by ash-smearing 'heretics'—doubtless siddhus. Koteshtar was plainly an important commercial centre; and



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it is impossible to suppose that it was the only town in Kutch. But Hiuen-tsang mentions no others.

There is no reason to doubt, from its size and importance, as well as from the advantages of the situation between the Indus and the Arabian Sea, that Koteshtar shared in the prosperous trade which Hiuen-tsang found existing throughout Sind and western India. This trade had for long been extremely well organized. A century before the Chinese pilgrim arrived in India, the classical geographer known as Cosmas Indicopleustes described how the spices of the Far East, arriving in the great ports of India's east coast, found their way to Ceylon, and thence to the west coast ports, where they were shipped to Persia, Arabia and Africa. It is interesting to notice that there was already a large importation of ivory from Africa. As Cosmas notes, the tusks of African elephants were large, and more highly valued, than Indian ivory. Quite possibly, the ancient and long-continued connection of Kutch with the trade in African ivory finds its origin in those days of the greatness of Koteshtar, the first Kutch port of which history tells.

Culturally, the general picture which the Chinese traveller presents shows that in spite of his contention that Buddhism was flourishing, in Kutch as in Sind, it was, in fact, declining. We know from other sources that everywhere throughout western India, the Rajput clans were beginning to take shape, as the foreign fighting aristocracy of Sakas, Huns, and other warlike immigrants mingled with the local warrior-stocks; counted themselves Kshatriyas in the Hindu tradition and enrolled themselves among the worshippers of Hindu deities. Moreover about this time Jainism was gaining ground in Kathiawad and Sind, and was no doubt establishing the firm position which it has occupied for so many centuries in Kutch.

The typical features of a feudal regime, with its weak central authority and multiplicity of vassals who rendered allegiance to their overlords only when obliged to do so, began to appear throughout western India. In Saurashtra, they weakened the Valabhi kingdom. In Sindhu, in the time of Chach the famous



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Brahmin monarch, and his successors, they gave much trouble. The kingdom of Sindhu possessed four provinces, in addition to the central territory ruled from Alor; and the governors of these provinces were in effect tributary rulers. Kutch itself may well, from its island-position, have presented temptation to an ambitious official desirous of setting himself up as an independent monarch; but the value of its trade, and the importance of the customs-revenue, no doubt induced the Alor Government to keep as firm a hold over it as was possible. But there is evidence that towards the end of the seventh century AD the authority of Alor was weakening, partly, perhaps, as a result of internal faction, but mainly because of the growing danger from the Arabs. Kutch began to feel the effects. Kathi tribesmen from Sind began to move into Kutch on their way to Kathiawad (to which they gave their name) and seized the centre and south of the island. From the eastern quarter, on the mainland, came Charans and Ahirs. These immigrants seem to have divided Kutch between them; their chiefs became territorial barons, with their own strongholds. Soon afterwards, the entire coast of western India was thrown into confusion by the Arab invasion of Sind.

In about AD 643 there was an ominous indication of future trouble in the form of an Arab naval raid on the port of Debal (whose modern location is uncertain) situated on one of the mouths of the river Indus. This was repelled. But a few years afterwards came an Arab invasion by land through the Bolan Pass. Again the effort failed; but as a result of repeated operations, the Arabs conquered Mekran. The Sindhu kingdom defended itself bravely; as a result of its toughness, its subjugation became a major objective of Arab policy. But many more Arab expeditions failed, until in AD 708, al-Hajjaj, Governor of Iraq, equipped a formidable invading force and dispatched it against the coast of Sindhu under the command of Mohammed ibn Qasim. This leader was a most capable general, and with the help of heavy siege engines, he captured city after city, and broke down all opposition in a series of pitched battles. But he



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might still have failed had he not received a great deal of help from traitors. Many local chieftains joined him; and when the King of Sindhu, Dahar, died bravely in battle, effective resistance ceased. Although Mohammed ibn Qasim was recalled in disgrace after seven years, owing to the hostility of a new Caliph, many of the tribal chiefs and notables of Sind had accepted Islam before his departure. This conversion of the Sind aristocracy was to exercise an important influence upon the future of Kutch.

The first effect of the Arab conquest of Sind was to destroy the last traces of Alor's authority over Kutch. The Arabs launched a series of expeditions from their new base against neighbouring territories between AD 724 and 738, in the course of which they defeated the chiefs who ruled in many places, including Kutch and Saurashtra. But the resistance of the Gujara and Chalukya rulers of Gujarat was so fierce that the Arabs were obliged to fall back upon Sind; and they do not appear to have settled seriously in Kutch until the ninth century AD.

Why did the Arabs sustain these reverses after their great initial success over the kingdom of Sindhu? The truth seems to have been that Arab naval power was not strong enough to outmatch the skill of the practised mariners of the west coast of India, whose deep-sea tradition must have made them formidable opponents. For this reason, no doubt, the Arabs failed, so long as they relied on sea-communications, to bring sufficient force to bear at any given point to overcome the gallant resistance of the powerful Rajput kings of Gujarat. Arab writers often complain of the 'pirates' of Kutch and Sind; this may be the echo of an Arab failure to keep the seaways clear for the transport of their troops and munitions of war.

About the time when Arab efforts to expand from Sind were meeting with this ill success, a powerful Chavotka (or Chavda) kingdom, famous as Anhilwada, with its capital at Anahilapataka, the modern Patan, was rising in Gujarat; and members of this same Chavda clan established themselves in the eastern



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part of Kutch. By this period the Kathis had spread eastward through central Kutch and had established themselves in Wagad, with their capital in the strong fort of Kanthkot. The Chavdas wrested Kanthkot from the Kathis some time in the eighth century AD and became the dominant clan in Wagad, which continued for some years to be subject to the suzerainty of Anhilwada. After about two centuries, the Chavdas lost Anhilwada to the Solanki branch of the Chaulukyas; but the suzerainty of Anhilwada over Wagad continued; and in course of the operations which the Solankis undertook against the Chavdas, a good many Solankis found homes in Kutch, along with their close kinsmen the Vaghelas. The Chavdas in Kutch remained strong, however, and were no doubt reinforced when their fellow clansmen lost Anhilapataka to the Solankis. There is some evidence that the Chavdas retreated westwards before the advancing Solankis and Vaghelas; Morgad, one of the Chavda cities said to have been founded after the Solanki capture of Anahilapataka, is south-west of Bhuj and many miles west of the border of Wagad. In this way Kutch became divided up between Rajput barons from Gujarat, who seem to have spread westwards at the expense of the earlier Kathi rulers, and to have subjected almost the whole country to Rajput domination. Gedi and other ancient towns in Wagad certainly existed at this time, and still possess traditions of Vaghela rule. But the old tug-of-war between Sind and Saurashtra-Gujarat for the possession of Kutch was soon to begin again.

The failure of the Arabs to make Sind the base for further conquests seems to have induced them to rule that territory very lightly; indeed from the time of the Caliph Umar II (AD 717-720) they were satisfied to leave the chiefs of Sind as independent rulers on condition that they accepted Islam. A great many of them did so. Among them were certain chiefs of the Samma Rajputs who claim a northern ancestry, with Syrian and even Egyptian affiliations, and whose original early title of Jam is by tradition associated with the mighty Iranian monarch Jamshed. According to legend, the branch of the



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Lunar race to which the Sammas belong had exercised kingly power for centuries in countries west of India, and it was only after they had lost their dominions to the conquering Arabs that they made their way eastwards. That they had had close contacts with Islam before they settled in Sind, which by this time was under Arab domination, seems clear; indeed the Muslim Sammas, who are still found in Sind, actually claim Arab descent. Not all the Samma chiefs of Sind were converted to Islam; those who continued in the Hindu tradition of their ancestry began to cultivate close connections with Kutch, where they found Chavda, Vaghela and Solanki Rajputs with whom they could contract marriage-alliances. But the fact that some of the Samma chieftains accepted Islam very early, induced a tolerant attitude towards that creed among those who remained Hindu; and this was to prove a fortunate circumstance for Kutch when a branch of the main Samma stock eventually came to exercise supreme power there.

According to Kutchi tradition, one of the most important chiefs of the Hindu branch of the Samma Rajputs early in the ninth century AD was Lakho Ghuraro, son of Lakhari Bad. It is related of him that he made two marriages from Kutch; one with Baudhi, daughter of Vaghela, Chavda chief of Patgadhi; the other with Chandra Kunvarba, called Gaud Rani, daughter of the Gohel chief of Kera. There were four sons by each marriage. When Lakho Ghuraro died, his eldest son Unnad, whose mother was the Gohel princess, succeeded him. But Unnad's half brothers, Mod and Manai, sons of the Chavda princess, plotted against him; and Manai murdered him with Mod's help. Gaud Rani was strong enough to secure the succession for her grandson, Sama. As a result, Mod and Manai were obliged to flee to Kutch in order to avoid her vengeance and to seek their future among their kinsfolk across the water with such of their clansmen as would follow them.

They took refuge at first with their Chavda uncle at Patgadhi. The remains of this town, over two miles in extent, lie six miles south-west of Lakhpat, on the banks of a stream which



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once ran into the Rann and must at this time have been navigable. The sites of two ancient customs-houses are still pointed out; and afford evidence of Patgadh's former commercial importance and closeness to the sea. Mod and Manai must have come there by ship.

The story of their exploits in Kutch shows that they tended to keep within reach of the sea, on which they were doubtless far more at home than were the Rajput chieftains whom they attacked. Vagham Chavda, who knew the reason for their exile, was suspicious of them from the first; he insisted that they take an oath in the temple of Kalika Mata to forswear treachery. They phrased the oath so cleverly that they succeeded in reassuring the simple Vagham without exposing themselves to divine vengeance.

The form of words they used is still remembered: 'If we turn faithless, then the goddess is between us. We pray to the goddess: we Sammas speak the truth.' Since the oath was taken by the two brothers simultaneously, its literal meaning was a prayer to the goddess to stand between the two of them; and not between them, on one side, and Vagham on the other. It was in fact a pact of faith between the two brothers—which they certainly observed all their lives.

After thus lulling his suspicions, they explored his country, and finding it good, decided to seize it. As they were returning from hunting one day, they found their uncle unguarded, telling his beads by the sacrificial tank near the temple of Koteswar. Mod stole behind him, and cut off his head, which fell into the water. The tank is still in existence, having been repaired more than once by local piety.

After the murder of Vagham, the brothers found no difficulty in seizing the important city which had been his capital, together with the surrounding territories. They could rely upon the attachment of their Samma clansmen who had followed them from Sind; and no doubt their relationship to Vagham, combined with their formidable characters, secured at least the passive obedience of the local Chavdas. But their



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position was still insecure. Patgadh was a fief of the Vaghela principality of Guntri, a strong walled town whose ruins can be seen near the small modern village of Gunthli, thirty-six miles north-west of Bhuj. At the time when the brothers arrived there, Guntri seems to have stood upon a navigable river, now the dried-up Dharur, with its own seaport of Chari where the Dharur joined the Rann. Like Patgadh, it was an important place. Its extensive trade in ancient times is evidenced by the large hordes of coins (now unfortunately lost) which villagers were accustomed to find in the ruins up to the end of the first quarter of the nineteenth century. The rule of Guntri was, according to local tradition, at that time shared between seven Vaghela brothers of the Sandh tribe, still remembered as the 'Seven Sandhs'. They sent angry messages to Patgadh, threatening to avenge on the Samma princes the murder of their vassal Vaghah; but were placated—or pretended to be so—when Mod and Manai promised to increase to eighteen the seven daily cartloads of grass, fodder, and other produce which Patgadh sent as its tribute to Guntri. They were sufficiently prudent, however, to insist that Manai must reside in Guntri as hostage for the brothers' good behaviour.

In Guntri, Manai was kept under light surveillance, and was allowed to ride about the country outside the walls. As he was handsome and free-handed, he quickly made friends, and established ways of communicating secretly with Mod in Patgadh. His presence in Guntri excited gossip; and one day, as he was sitting on the open air platform near the gate of the house where he lodged, he heard two women discussing him on their way back from the well. One said: 'Look, there's that brave Samma prince—how handsome he is! And to think that he is kept here as a hostage!' The other replied: 'What is the good of a hostage like him? The Sammas are brave, we are told; but they must be fools, or they would know how easily they could destroy the Seven Sandhs, who live in separate houses, hate each other, and are only interested in keeping their jurisdiction over the particular wards of the city where each



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one lives. If I were a Samma, I should send five armed men in each of the eighteen grass carts which arrive here daily. That would mean, with the drivers, one hundred and eight men inside the walls. Fifteen men could go simultaneously to each house where one of the Sandhs lives. If they were sensible enough to catch them at their morning prayers, that would be the end of *them!*'

Manai, impressed with the idea, scratched a message giving full details of it on the shard of a broken pitcher and despatched it to Mod by a sure hand. Mod acted quickly, and packed some of his bravest followers into the grass carts. But disaster nearly overtook the enterprise. Among the sentries who guarded the gate through which the Patgadh waggons passed every day was a blind soldier named Chad, who kept his position because of the extraordinary acuteness of his remaining senses. As the convoy which concealed the armed men approached the gate, Chad called out, in a couplet which is still repeated: 'Chad the sentry says that there is no grass in the carts to-day; either they contain *mag* or living flesh'. To test the warning, another sentry, a Gurjar Rajput, drove a long spear into the load of the leading cart. It pierced the thigh of one of Mod's men, a Jat named Gangho. With great presence of mind, he uttered no sound, and contrived that the spear blade should be wiped clean by a fold of his tunic, which he held in his hand, as the sentry withdrew his weapon. The carts were then admitted, while the sentries jeered at the suspicions of Chad, who was by no means satisfied that his instincts had betrayed him. But it was too late. The carts dispersed into groups; each group made its way to the house of a particular Sandh. The warriors burst in while their victims were at prayers; and all the seven rulers of Guntri perished. Mod and Manai became masters of the city and of its dependent territory.

Their possessions now stretched along the western part of the northern seaboard of Kutch, and no doubt they were confident that their control of local waters would protect them from attack. How long they took to consolidate their gains is not



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known; but Mod was the father of a son before they were ready for their next advance. To the east, in Wagad, lay the ancient city of Gedi, the capital of Dharan, another Vaghela chieftain. It was necessary for Mod and Manai to make friends with him, both because he controlled the eastern part of the northern seaboard, and because he was in touch with his kinsmen the powerful Chavda rulers of the great city of Anahilapataka. Perhaps fortunately for them, Dharan was impressed by their conquests and preferred to make terms with them rather than to fight them. He betrothed his daughter to Mod's son, Sad. Mod and Manai, who disappear from the records, appear to have become vassals of Anahilapataka; because Sad, when he succeeded to the possessions of his father and uncle, took up his residence in Kanthkot, which he made his capital. Possibly he enlarged it, because Kutchi tradition credits him with building it, although it was far older than his time.

The disappearance of the formidable Mod and Manai, presumably by death, somewhere in the latter half of the ninth century AD may have weakened Sad's position; for by the time that Sad's son Ful was six months old, Dharan Vaghela felt strong enough to rid himself of the troublesome Samma intruders. He murdered Sad—under what circumstances we do not know—and probably overran all the territories which Sad had inherited from Mod and Manai, because the infant Ful was taken back to Sind. That Ful escaped his grandfather's effort to exterminate the entire Kutch branch of the Sammas is ascribed to the devotion of a maidservant named Boladi, who dressed her own son in the royal infant's robes and sacrificed his life to save the baby prince, whom she carried away to safety in her arms.

In Sind the little Ful was befriended by a kinsman named Dhulara, probably a member of the Muslim branch of the Sammas; and was thus brought up in the court of a Muslim prince. He appears to have run true to the adventurous spirit of his paternal grandfather and granduncle. As soon as he



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reached fighting age, he returned to Kutch, presented himself at the court of Gedi, and challenged his maternal grandfather Dharan Vaghela to combat.

Dharan Vaghela, by now certainly an elderly man, preferred to make peace by giving one of his daughters (or perhaps a more distant kinswoman) to Ful in marriage. Ful seems to have found no difficulty in regaining his possessions; but he never forgot that Dharan had murdered his father, and narrowly missed murdering himself. In revenge, he killed Dharan on the first opportunity and flayed the corpse. Happening one day to quarrel with his wife over a game of chess, he cruelly tricked her into sitting upon the skin of her murdered kinsman. Although she was pregnant at the time, she committed suicide. Her unborn infant was cut living from her body, and was known as Ghao—born of the wound.

Ful was a considerable warrior, and appears to have ruled prosperously, as a vassal of Anahilapataka, the kingdom of Gedi as well as the territories of Guntri and Patgadh. But his fame is eclipsed in the traditions of Kutch by the prowess of his younger son, the famous Lakho Fulani. There has been much discussion over the dating of this heroic personage; and earlier British writers have fallen into confusion through failure to distinguish between the several Lakhos who figure in the annals—Lakho Ghuraro in the ninth century, Lakho Fulani in the tenth century, and finally (in the twelfth century) Lakho 'Lakhia'. But the evidence of Kutch's memorized history coincides accurately with the evidence of *Ras Mala* and other chronicles of Gujarat; and there is even some epigraphical data to confirm both. Lakho Fulani was born, according to Kutch tradition, in Samvat 976 (AD 920); a date which is common to many of the songs and legends which describe his exploits. Finally, as we shall see, it is quite certain that he was slain at the battle of Atkot in Kathiawad in Samvat 1035 (AD 979).

Lakho Fulani was the son of a Rabari (gipsy) girl whom Ful had married late in life. There is a tradition that she was remarkable for her beauty and for her intelligence. With such a



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mother and father, it is not surprising that Lakho Fulani showed early signs of an exceptionally strong and enterprising character; and that as soon as he grew to manhood he quarrelled with his father.

He crossed the Rann to seek his fortune at the court of his father's overlords, the Chavda rulers of Anahilapataka. Here, according to Kutch authorities, he won fame both as a gallant soldier and as an astute politician; and his reputation spread through Saurashtra and Gujarat. No doubt he became attached to the Chavda Ruling House whose members had befriended him; and this accounts for the beginning of his enmity with the Solanki prince Mularaja Chaulukya. Mularaja (known dates AD 940-996) killed Samant Singh, the Chavda king of Anhilwada, who was his uncle and adopted father, seized the city of Anahilapakha, and brought Chavda rule to an end.

When Ful died, Lakho Fulani returned to Kutch and succeeded his father. It is not known whether Lakho's elder half-brother, Ghao, had died also; but Lakho recognized Ghao's son Punvro as his heir. The date of Lakho Fulani's accession is unknown; but as he is credited with a long reign (later exaggerated by popular legend to the span of a century and a half) he may have come to the throne as a comparatively young man—certainly before Mularaja seized Anahilapataka and founded the Solanki or Chaulukya dynasty of Anhilwada which lasted until AD 1242.

Mularaja, as ruler of Anahilapataka, succeeded to the former Chavda overlordship in Kutch, and Lakho Fulani must have been his vassal, in name at least. Mularaja's subversion of Chavda rule did not fail to bring down upon his head the hostility of ambitious rivals; and soon after he became King of Anhilwada he was attacked from two different directions. The Chahamana king Vigraharaja invaded the country from the north and a large army commanded by the Kanarese general Barappa was sent against Anhilwada from the south by Tailappa II who had destroyed the power of the Rashtrakutas in the Deccan and was anxious to extend his authority over Gujarat. Confronted



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by this formidable combination of foes, Mularaja fled across the Rann to Kutch, and took refuge in the fort of Kanthkot, secure in the knowledge that neither of his opponents commanded any naval power sufficient to follow him. Here he called upon his vassals in Kutch to rally to his support; and after he had succeeded in making an arrangement with Vighraharaja—whose objective was probably wealth rather than territory—he recrossed the Rann, fell upon Barappa, and destroyed him and his army.

It seems unlikely that Lakho Fulani took any part in these operations: his sympathies were probably with Mularaja's enemies. There was, in fact, much bad blood between the two. The Gujarat annals state (although there is no confirmation from the Kutch side) that Raj Solanki, who was Mularaja's natural father, had visited the court of Lakho Fulani after the death in childbirth of his first wife Lila Devi—Mularaja's mother, the sister of the last Chavda King Samant Singh. There he had married Lakho's sister Rayaji, by whom he had another son, Rakhaich. As a result of some dispute over precedence at a court function, a brawl broke out. Raj Solanki, together with many of his train, was slain by Lakho and his Samma henchmen. The unfortunate Rayaji committed *sati* after the death of her husband at the hands of her brother; but Rakhaich was brought up by Lakho, who tried to use him as a figure-head for conspiracies against Mularaja. Somewhat naturally, this annoyed Mularaja, one of whose uncles, Bij Solanki, was always urging him to avenge his natural father's death.

Lakho (died AD 979) must have been very busy at this time fortifying and enlarging Kera, once the home of his great-grandfather Lakho Guraro's second wife, Gaud Rani. This ruined city stands now on the Mundra road twelve miles south of Bhuj. Lakho made it into a splendid capital, conveniently far away from Wagad, where the authority of Mularaja and Anahilapataka was more effective. Kera is a sad sight to-day, for the stones of the ancient temple and fortress of Lakho Fulani's time have been largely plundered to construct later



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buildings. But the shrine and the spire of a magnificently impressive Shaivite temple still stand, although they have been badly damaged by earthquake shocks, and are urgently in need of rescue-operations by the Archaeological Department of India if they are not to crumble into ruins. The massive blocks, set on one another without the aid of cement, are splendid examples of masons' work in very hard stone, which retains its clear-cut edges even to-day. The carving of the ornamentation, which is restrained, without exuberance or overcharging, is equally precise; on each face of the spire there are eight triangles of sculpture, which diminish in size as they ascend, one behind the other, in the form of a window, with human figures round it.

The tenth century in Kutch was a period of admirable architectural achievement; Lakho Fulani must have been a great patron of builders and architects. It is unlikely that he had any close connection with all of the temples and forts which are popularly associated with his name; for through the mist of ages his fame has grown until he has become a kind of symbol of everything which is splendid and old in the estimation of the Kutchi people. But enough survives in Kera, and in Padhargadh, the city of Lakho's nephew and successor, Punvro, to illustrate the extraordinary mastery over hard stone which the masons of Kutch had achieved at this time. Some of these stones are ten feet long; and in Padhargadh are used exactly like roof beams, being supported on solid monolithic pillars, carved, ornamented capitals and all, out of single blocks. No doubt the general shortage of large timber, suitable for building work, lies at the root of this remarkable employment of stone to take the place of wooden beams; but the degree of skill displayed by these early Kutchi architects and builders excites admiration even a thousand years after their time.

The 'memorized history' of Kutch gives no clue to the length of time which Lakho Fulani spent at Kera, and some of the work on the surviving temple and spire may have been completed after his death. But Kera seems to have been his capital



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until AD 979, the year in which he set forth on the greatest of his many operations against Mularaja of Anahilapataka.

Mularaja, tenacious and ambitious, spent a long life (he died about AD 995) in extending his territories or in repelling invasions: and he had a good deal of difficulty in enforcing his supremacy over the Kathiawad princes nearer home. Among those with whom he quarrelled was Graharipu, 'enemy of the planet' as his foes called him, who belonged to the Chudasama kings of the Junagadh region. This had been the seat of a minor Chalukya dynasty until in AD 875 (about a century before Lakho Fulani's death) when these Chalukyas were expelled by Ra Chuda, who belonged to the widely-scattered, originally nomadic, Abhiras, already ranking as a reputable Rajput Clan. The Chudasamas had their capital at Wanthali, near Junagadh: and they seem to have maintained friendlier relations with the wild tribes, such as the Bhils and Kolis, than neighbouring Rajput chieftains considered proper. Graharipu, the reigning Chudasama, made himself obnoxious by his unorthodox ways; he was accused of eating beef and drinking spirits; of persecuting pilgrims on their way to the sacred shrine of Somnath by means of the exactions which his wild followers levied upon them; and of hunting deer, on the Gir hills, even in places whose sacred character might be expected to afford sanctuary to every form of life. These accusations may have been propaganda put out by Mularaja to justify his attack upon the Lord of Wanthali, who, even if he were a mlechcha (heretic) was also a renowned warrior, with a strong fortress at Junagadh; and, no doubt, from the point of view of his overlord, a recalcitrant vassal. But they proved effective in bringing to Mularaja's assistance a kind of crusading force, which included a Rathor prince from Marwar, a Purnar ruler from Abu, and a raja from Benares. According to the Gujarat chronicles, Mularaja's cousins, the sons of his uncles Bij Solanki and Dandak Solanki, would not join in the campaign; Graharipu was feared even in Anahilapataka because of his skill in fighting over his hilly, forest country, and because of



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his mastery of the sea which flanked his dominions. But the main objection to attacking him seems to have been his close alliance with Lakho Fulani, 'great Raja, and unconquered by any' as the Gujarati chroniclers put it, 'who is as inseparable from Grahariṇi as if they were sons of the same mother'.

How this close friendship between Lakho Fulani and the lord of Wanthali originated, we do not know. Wandering bands of Abhiras settled in Kutch in very early times—indeed they are still to be found, a considerable element of the population, as craftsmen and husbandmen, under their modern appellation of Ahirs. Whether Lakho Fulani made the acquaintance of Grahariṇi through Abhira clansmen in Kutch; or whether the two men came in contact during the years when Lakho was learning warfare and statecraft as a young man in Anahilapataka, no one knows. What is clear is that the news of Mularaja's projected attack on Grahariṇi brought Lakho Fulani across the sea in full force to help his friend. Lakho had been told by his astrologers that if he went, he would never return; but the old warrior—he was now fifty-nine—'cried shame upon young men who had still their fame to win, saying that the days of his life were numbered, and why should he care for their span?'

Enmity towards Mularaja and friendship with Grahariṇi would no doubt have drawn Lakho into the quarrel in any case; but there are some indications that more than purely personal considerations influenced him. Gujarati sources show that he brought with him not only his own warriors from Kutch, but also a powerful contingent under the command of 'the Sindhu Raja, whose kingdom is on the banks of the ocean'. This looks very much as if Lakho had mobilized the resources of his Samma kinsfolk in Sind in a supreme effort to throw off Anhilwada suzerainty from eastern Kutch and to secure the whole island for his own branch of the Sammas. However this may be, battle was joined between the armies at Atkot 'on the banks of the Jambumali river', where, after a bitter contest, Grahariṇi was stricken from his elephant and taken prisoner.



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His followers fled in confusion; but Lakho, of stouter metal, boldly advanced, sought a parley, and demanded permission to ransom his friend. Mularaja refused the proposal. Lakho, either because he resented this contravention of the usual courtesies of Rajput warfare, or because hatred of his enemy got the better of him, fell upon Mularaja single-handed. But the old man was no longer the mighty warrior he had been in the heyday of his strength. His desperate venture failed, and before long he lay dead on the field. More than one prince claimed the credit for slaying the most renowned warrior of his epoch. Gujarati chroniclers say that he was slain by Mularaja's own spear. But Marwar insists that it was the Rathor, Raja Siyoji, who killed Lakho. 'Ages shall wear away,' the Marwar Bards sang, 'but this tale shall survive'. It may well be, indeed, that both Mularaja, and some of the other princes who must have joined him for the parley, had a hand in the death of Lakho. Certainly two *paliyas* (memorials erected on the field of battle to commemorate the prowess of a fallen warrior) were set up for Lakho at Atkot, and were to be seen as recently as the middle of the last century. At some earlier period, the date of Lakho's death (Samvat 1036—AD 979–80) seems to have been legible on one of them; but in 1879, when Dalpatram Pranjivan Khakhar made inquiries in connection with his archaeological survey of Kutch, he was informed that no inscription could be traced.

What happened to Graharipu's Kutchi and Sindhi allies after his capture, and after the death of Lakho can only be conjectured; presumably they retreated by sea to their own possessions. Mularaja's victory not only assured the vassalage of Wanthali, but also confirmed the supremacy of Anahilapataka over Wagad. In this connection it is no doubt significant that Punvro, Lakho Fulani's nephew and acknowledged heir, found it expedient to move his capital from Kera, and to build a new stronghold for himself at Padhargadh, which is seventeen miles west of Bhuj and a good deal further away from Wagad than Lakho's headquarters. The buildings which survive—the



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remains of two palaces, a mint, a temple—though greatly decayed, resemble Kera in their general style; and may even have been the work of the same craftsmen to the design of the same architects.

Jam Punvro succeeded to the throne without opposition. He has left a very evil reputation in Kutch. He is said to have been notably cruel even in that harsh age: it is told of him that after Padhargadh was finished, he cut off the hands of his chief architect to prevent that great artist from doing similar work for another prince. But he is best remembered for his connection with one of the most remarkable episodes recorded in Rajput history—the arrival of those mysterious people, the 'Jakhs', whose brief and tragic incursion into the affairs of Kutch is inseparably connected with the death of Jam Punvro and the destruction of Padhargadh.

The popular legends concerning these events were first collected on the spot and written down by Major (later Sir Alexander) Burnes in 1826; copied with minor variations by Mrs Postans (1839) and later writers and finally embodied in the 'standard' account of Kutch (otherwise a generally reliable source) in Volume V of the *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency* in 1880. Briefly, the story runs as follows.

Soon after Punvro had completed Padhargadh, seven devotees named Rukhis, or Sanghars, came to Kutch from the neighbourhood of Byzantium, and settled down nearby to worship their god Jakh. Their reputation for holiness, and particularly their power of conferring the blessings of an heir upon childless couples, came to the notice of Punvro's queen, who had no son. At this point there are different accounts. One account states that the Rukhis offended the Queen by treating her like an ordinary woman without regard to her rank: so that she became annoyed and, out of spite, incited Punvro to maltreat the Rukhis. Another account has it that she enrolled herself among their devotees; constructed an underground passage by which they could visit her; and arranged to perform the necessary sacrifices; while Punvro, in accordance with his



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character, put the worst construction on her conduct. Both accounts agree that he arrested the Rukhis and compelled them to tread out grain on a threshing floor which had been plentifully sprinkled with sharp-pointed iron calthrops. One Rukhi when released by a kind-hearted barber named Bambra, who took his place, hastened to the top of a hill called Lakhaira, and called to his god Jakh for help. Jakh, with seventy-one brothers and a sister, came from Byzantium to Kutch, where the weight of their combined sanctities flattened the top of hill after hill, until at last they had to build a hill for themselves, by taking stones out of their saddle bags, near Padhargadh. This hill they made their resting place, calling it Kakabit. They ordered Punvro to set the captive Rukhis free, and when he refused, fired arrows at him—but with no success because of the powerful amulet which he wore. Then Sairi, the sister, changed herself into a mosquito, and bit Punvro, who took off the amulet to relieve himself of the irritation by bathing. The youngest Jakh, Kakar, then fired an arrow against the corner of the palace where the royal bath was situated, so that a great stone fell on Punvro, and injured him so badly that he died in forty days. The Jakhs cursed Padhargadh, so that it became ruined and deserted.

This story is still told among the Kutchi people to-day. Along with it there is a slightly more sophisticated version, which relates how the Sanghars, oppressed by Punvro, sought the aid of white-skinned, horse-riding foreigners from Central Asia, who stormed Padhargadh and killed Punvro.

Both versions end the same way. The Jakhs became demi-gods; images of the seventy-two men and one woman, mounted on horses, are worshipped to this day in Kutch. Many stories are still told of their power. One such story relates that Rao Desalji (1716–1751) once asked what proof there was that the Jakhs were worth worshipping. The Royal Bard of the time, Hamirji by name, offered to provide such a proof; and related how, when he was riding one night from Bhuj to Mandvi, he came upon a huge camp of strange men, none of



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whom he recognized. Someone shouted to him 'Hulloa, Bard, come in!' He entered the camp, was well entertained, but could find no clue as to who his hosts might be. After dining, he went to sleep in a tent to which he had been directed. When he woke up next morning, he was lying on the bare ground—no camp, no tent, no hosts—with his horse tethered to a tree in the open. As he removed the horse's blanket to saddle-up, he saw a paper on which were inscribed the names of the seventy-three Jakhs.

Rao Desalji was so far from being convinced by this story, that he criticized the Bard's credulity; and Hamirji, thinking his honour lost, decided to commit suicide. But as he was about to fall on the point of his sword, his hand was held and he was commanded to desist by a Jakh, who told him that if Rao Desalji follow a certain procedure, convincing proof of the existence of the Jakhs would be forthcoming. The Rao, accordingly, with an incense-burner in his hand, left the palace in company with his sardars and officers, and came to an open space near one of the market squares. Suddenly from heaven the seventy-three Jakhs appeared, flying on their celestial horses round the open space in full view of the Rao and his court. To commemorate the event, Rao Desalji built a temple in the place, henceforth called Jakhjar; he and his successors observed the anniversary by going to the temple each year to worship.

Apart from this tale, which is recounted even to-day, the ordinary people of Kutch still firmly believe the legend of the origin of the Jakhs which has been summarized on an earlier page. So seriously is it taken that a number of British, and even of Indian, writers have set themselves to extract whatever solid basis of historical fact may underlie this mixture of credulity and folk-lore, and could thus serve to account for the unique Jakh temples, with their curious equestrian images, which Kutch alone possesses. The Jakhs have been tentatively identified with the Yakshas, the supernatural horsemen of Hindu and Buddhist writings, with Greeks, with Romans, with Sakas, with White Huns. Yet in fact there exists in the 'memorized



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history', passed down through many generations of the Royal Bards of the Jadeja dynasty, a perfectly consistent and intelligible version of the Jakh affair, which, so far as the present writer knows, is here written down for the first time.

The present Royal Bard, now pensioned off, and the last of his line, received from his predecessors this account, which he repeats in exactly the same manner, without any variation in language or detail, as often as he is asked to do so.

Early in the reign of Punvro, there arrived on the shores of Kutch seventy-two men and one woman. They had been shipwrecked and they landed on rafts at the anchorage of Jakhao, the name of which still preserves their style or title of Jakhs. They were tall and of fair complexion, blue or grey-eyed, speaking no language which even the widely-travelled Kutchi longshoremen (who must have been familiar with Arabic and Swahili) could understand and they communicated by signs until they learned the Kutchi speech. It was thought they came from somewhere near Byzantium. They stayed at Jakhao for some time, where there are still many statues in their honour, and then broke up into parties of twos and threes and travelled through the countryside. They were skilled in medicine and in other useful arts and they gave instruction in these to the villagers whom they met. They became well-liked and were presented with horses so that they could travel about more easily.

Their activities, and particularly their popularity, brought them to the unfavourable notice of Punvro, who arrested a party of them who were working near Padhargadh. The other Jakhs then gathered round Padhargadh and begged Punvro to release their colleagues. When he refused, they established themselves on the nearby hill of Kakabit, and kept a careful watch on the King. One day, when he was bathing, they cast a missile from a powerful engine which they had constructed on top of Kakabit. This missile struck a corner of the palace, and brought down some of the great roof stones on the head of Punvro. He was so badly injured that after lingering for forty



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days, he died. His widow, in revenge, had all the Jakhs hunted down and murdered. The people, appalled at the massacre, remembered their good deeds, and revered them as saints, setting up temples to them in many parts of Kutch.

These temples still exist; each is set on the top of a hill, which must be ascended by flights of steps. There is at the highest level an open square enclosure, or courtyard, along one side of which are arranged seventy-three equestrian images. A light, generally in an enclosed lantern, burns night and day but hangs on a post, and is not set at the feet of the images, like the votive lamps in a Hindu temple. These images are replaced, as they become weathered; a comparison between the new and the older discarded examples (which are reverently stored not far away from the more modern examples) reveals not the slightest change in style, which appears to be traditional. The riders carry no arms (such as might be associated with supernatural warriors) but bear boxes and scrolls, as though they were chapmen or travelling doctors. An annual fair and pilgrimage is held near these temples.

Who can these people have been? The Royal Bard knows all their names, which have been handed down to him by his predecessors; but those names are so shaped by the Kutchi dialect that there is little clue to their original provenance. The name of Sairi, the woman, and of Kakar, occur as in the popular form of the Jakh legend. That the Jakhs came from some country west of India seems certain. They may have constructed and used some form of classical siege-engine—perhaps a ballista or mangonel, which could easily throw a rock or iron-tipped beam on Padhargadh from the elevation of Kakabit. This argues some acquaintance with tenth-century western warfare. Possibly they were adventurous members of the Varangian Guard, which the Greek Emperors of Byzantium were accustomed to recruit from the Viking villages. But it is difficult to suppose that such fierce warriors would know much of medicine, or, indeed, would devote themselves to public instruction: they would have been more likely to look for plunder. On the



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other hand, Zoroastrians from the northern parts of Iran, who, during the whole of this period, were emigrating to India in search of the religious toleration which Islamic persecutors denied them in their own country, would certainly strike the Kutchis as fair in complexion. Their peaceful traditions and skill in the arts would favour the kind of behaviour which the Kutchis associate with their memory, while their high level of education and learning could provide at least one member of the band with a knowledge, at least in theory, of the kind of siege-engine which could be constructed from materials—leather, iron and wood—available in Kutch at the time. The presence of fire in their temples may be another indication of their possible Iranian origin. It should be added that the Parsis of Bombay have a tradition that some of the ships bringing their ancestors from the coast of Iran to the coast of India, went astray and were heard of no more. In the absence of conclusive evidence, certainty is impossible; but a hypothetical association of the Jakhs with the series of long-continued migrations which established the Parsi community on Indian soil does not seem unreasonable.

However this may be, the Jakhs certainly brought death to Punvro, and along with this event came the failure of the first effort of the Samma Rajputs from Sind to secure control over Kutch. But if the rational explanation of the fate of Punvro is correct, how was Padhargadh destroyed? The curse which to this day hangs over it in popular estimation may easily be connected with the traditions of Jakh 'martyrdom'. But these by themselves could not produce the chaos into which the city has fallen: a condition to which the older city of Kera, in spite of destruction wrought by pillage of stones, seismic shocks, and long-continued neglect, provides no parallel. But here again the Bardic tradition comes to the rescue. It is said that after Punvro's death without an heir, Padhargadh was stormed, sacked and destroyed by a Rajput knight-errant or soldier of fortune, Ahivanraj Chavda, grandson of Samant Singh, the last Chavda ruler of Anahilapataka, whose dynasty had been



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subverted by Mularaja Solanki. After the ruin of the Chavda dynasty, Ahivanraj is said to have been expelled from Anhilwada and to have lived as an outlaw for some time in Kutch—so often, at this period, the refuge of Rajput chieftains whose fortunes had suffered in fighting on the mainland. Being a mighty warrior, he retrieved his position by establishing himself as a ruler at Morgad, south-west of Bhuj, where the name of his line is perhaps commemorated in Chavadko Lake nearby, for no trace of his capital survives. Padhargadh must have been an uncomfortable neighbour to him and no doubt he was glad to take the opportunity of the confusion following Punvro's death to destroy it once for all and to break the power of the Sammas in Kutch. He is said to have built up a dominion extending over more than a hundred villages. There is a tradition that in his operations against the Sammas he considered himself the lieutenant of Mularaja, who would naturally do his best to ensure that no Samma prince in Kutch grew powerful enough to emulate the exploits, and to continue the hostility to the Solankis, which had distinguished Lakho Fulani. But it seems impossible to believe that Ahivanraj had much kindness for the man who had slain his grandfather and had driven him into exile: and whatever nominal allegiance he may have thought it politic to profess to the kingdom of Anhilwada, his main concern was undoubtedly to build up an independent principality in Kutch with the help of those of his Chavda kinsfolk who had survived the attacks of the Sammas.

In this he was so successful that Samma rule disappeared entirely for a period of about 130 years in central and western Kutch; while in eastern Kutch the authority of the Solanki dynasty of Anahilapataka seems to have continued. Gujarat-Saurashtra had thus won the first long round against Sind for the possession of Kutch and was to enjoy the fruits of its victory for more than a century, during which the Anhilwada rulers made grants to loyal followers of villages in Kutch. This hiatus in Samma rule has greatly puzzled some students of Kutch history; in popular parlance it is accounted for by the



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assumption that Lakho Fulani must have lived for one hundred and twenty-four years. Earlier British writers on Kutch, unable to accept this (in Kutchi eyes) reasonable explanation—and further confused between the respective eras of Lakho Ghuraro, Lakho Fulani and Lakho 'Lakhia'—have been led to assume that the second (and final) period of Samma rule, and the emergence of the Jadeja dynasty, must have followed directly upon the death of Punvro, which they accordingly place many decades after its actual occurrence. But the Bardic 'unwritten history' is quite clear that over a century of Chavda and Solanki rule intervened between the first and the second epochs of Samma power in the island; and that the third Lakho, who was not of the line of Mod and Manai, but of Unnad, the half-brother whom Manai had murdered in Sind, did not arrive in Kutch until AD 1147.

Of the history of Kutch between about AD 985 which is the approximate date of the end of the short reign of the ill-starred and detested Punvro, and AD 1147, when a fresh influx of princely adventurers reached the island from the ancient Samma ruling house in Sind, almost nothing is known. But no doubt echoes reached it of the final break up of Pratihara rule in northern India; of the confusion which followed and of the devastating defeats inflicted upon gallant but disunited Rajput kings who sought to resist the incursions of Mahmud of Ghazni (AD 997–1030). This formidable freebooter (and from the Hindu point of view he was little better) came very close to Kutch when he conducted the last and most infamous of his treasure-hunting raids in 1025. His objective was the famous temple of Somnath, which was inside the dominions of Anhilwada. At the time, the lord of Anahilapataka was Bhima I, great-great-grandson of Mularaja. Like Mularaja before him, Bhima found refuge in Kutch, leaving his capital, and the celebrated shrine of Somnath, at the mercy of his foe. Probably he went to Kanthkot, still the main stronghold of Anhilwada in Wagad. He has been blamed by Indian historians for this action, but Gujarati sources make clear that he was in fact a

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mighty warrior, a worthy descendant of Mularaja. As soon as the Muslim raiders began to retire, he returned from Kutch and attacked them fiercely, not only regaining authority in Anahilapataka, but inflicting severe loss on Mahmud of Ghazni.

One of the mysteries of this campaign is why Mahmud, who returned to Ghazni by way of Multan, decided to take the long and dangerous way back by land, through the Rajputana desert. It must surely have seemed much simpler to go by sea to Sind, where he had established his authority, after displacing the Muslim Governor who still owed nominal allegiance to the Caliphate, as far back as 1010. Ships were certainly not lacking on the coasts of Saurashtra; many of the men who manned them were Muslims. It is possible that the seapower of the Hindu kings of Kathiawad was strong enough to make any return by sea perilous. But about this time considerable seismic changes were taking place, which diverted the course of the river Indus far to the west, and seems gradually to have raised the level of the Rann so that navigation on the northern shores of Kutch became difficult. If, for this reason, Mahmud had to contemplate either a voyage across the dangerous Arabian Sea to the mouth of the river Indus, or a perilous march across the marshes of the Rann, in which more than one army trying to reach Kutch from the east was later to perish miserably, he was probably prudent to choose to return along the weary and dangerous land route, rather westward of that by which he had originally reached Somnath.



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THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE JADEJAS

THE establishment of a new Muslim power in Sind does not seem to have affected greatly the position of the Samma Rajputs: indeed the rule set up by Mahmud of Ghazni fell into decline. Before long, the Rajput Princes, some Hindu and some Muslim, resumed their independence, and about AD 1053 a new dynasty, the Sumras, set up their kingdom in the eastern delta of Lower Sind. This kingdom remained autonomous for more than a century, until Mohammed Ghori, whose dynasty had annexed Ghazni and had inherited Mahmud's ambitions, conquered Sind about AD 1175-76. He consolidated his authority in that province, and used its resources to further his conquests in northern India. From this time onwards, Upper Sind is reckoned a part of the Sultanate of Delhi. Kubacha, his deputy, also held Sind for Kutb-ud-din, the first of the Slave Kings of Delhi; but after Kutb-ud-din's death, Kubacha revolted and tried to set up an independent kingdom. He was defeated and overthrown by Sultan Altamsh. The Rajput dynasties of Lower Sind remained undisturbed for some time, although they doubtless paid tribute to the Imperial Governors at Multan. Further to the east, in Gujarat, the Muslim advance



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met with less success, being repulsed more than once by the forces of Anhilwada. In spite of this check, the gradual conquest of India by the forces of Islam proceeded remorselessly, and was before long to exert an overmastering influence upon the fortunes of Gujarat, Saurashtra, Sind and Kutch.

There are traditions of bad blood between the Sumra and the Samma Rajputs, and of some persecution of the latter by the former in the time of their power. The change in the course of the River Indus seems also to have affected adversely Samma interests; and these new factors may have directed the attention of the Sammas once again to Kutch, where an earlier generation of their House had achieved such striking, if temporary success. Some time before the middle of the twelfth century, a Samma prince bearing the honoured name of Lakho and descended from the old line of Unnad, decided to seek his fortune across the Rann. This Lakho had been adopted in infancy by a childless Samma chieftain named Jada: he accordingly adopted the style 'Jadeja' or 'of Jada'. The immediate cause of his decision to embark upon a new venture was the birth of a son to Jada late in life, when Lakho had reached years of discretion. He had no future in Sind. Like Mod and Manai before him, but without their burden of guilt, he collected a force of adventurous followers and arrived in Kutch in AD 1147 accompanied by a twin brother, Lakhia. In the traditional history of Kutch, the two knights are often termed 'Lakho-Lakhia', as though they were a single person, to distinguish their era from those of the two older Lakhos, Lakho Guraro and Lakho Fulani. It seems clear from the available evidence that some at least of the Samma Rajputs who accompanied the two princes to Kutch were Muslims. They belonged to the unorthodox Karmathian sect—which was to prove a source of later trouble.

Lakho and his clansmen can have encountered very little organized opposition in western and central Kutch, where Chavda power had decayed. After the fashion of the time, they built themselves a new capital, Lakhia, about twenty miles from the ruins of Padhargadh. This became the main seat of



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their power. But they were cautious about extending their activities into Wagad, where the authority of Anilwada and the Solanki-Vaghelas still persisted. There is a tradition, however, that the great fort of Kanthkot fell into Lakho's hands before he died in AD 1175. This is possible, because the power of Anhilwada was being weakened about this time by disputed successions and continued fighting with neighbours; but the loss of Kanthkot to the Sammas seems more likely to have taken place a little later—early in the thirteenth century, when Anahilapataka was raided, sacked, and temporarily occupied by Sultan Kutb-ud-din of Delhi. In spite of the troubles which overtook the kingdom of Anhilwada, the Samma rulers of Kutch were not to be rid of it easily, for it received a fresh lease of life later in the thirteenth century from a new and vigorous dynasty of Vaghelas from Dholka, who seem to have reasserted the old Solanki claim to overlordship in Wagad. And when the long history of Anhilwada closed in blood and destruction in 1296, Kutch was confronted by a new and even more formidable heir to its pretensions—the Muslim Sultanate of Delhi.

These developments, however, were far in the future when Lakho died, leaving his newly-acquired dominions in Kutch to his heir Rayadhan—known as 'Red' Rayadhan from the scarlet cloth which he was accustomed to tie round his turban in battle. The Kutchi annals are silent about Rayadhan's reign, contenting themselves with the statement that he was a mighty warrior who enlarged the territories which he had inherited until they covered most of the country. This indeed is borne out by the details of the division of his possessions among his four sons. But Rayadhan is generally remembered in his country for his associations with the famous saint Gharibnath, adopted son and disciple of the even more eminent Dharamnath, and with the great monastic foundation of Dhinodhar, mother-house of the Kanphata order. It appears that Rayadhan sought to enlist the ghostly powers of Gharibnath in support of his efforts to subdue some Jat tribesmen who were giving him trouble. Whether these Jats had come to Kutch before Lakho



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THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE JADEJAS

'Lakhiar', and had resisted him, as they were now resisting his son, can only be conjectured, but it seems likely that they were Muslim Jats from Sind, converts to Islam from the time of the Caliphs, because they showed no respect for the sacred person of Gharibnath and allowed their children to pelt him with mango-stones as he was practising his austerities. The saint had thus his own reasons for disliking these Jats, and threw his influence behind Rayadhan, who successfully subdued them. This event is commemorated in a Kutchi couplet which records how: 'Grave Gharibnath spake with his lips, and expelled the treacherous Jats, giving dominion to Rayadhan'. As a result, Rayadhan made gifts of land to the Dhinodhar monastery—the earliest of which the Kanphata community has any record.

The fame of Gharibnath and his guru Dharamnath is widespread in Kutch, not only as miracle-working saints, but also as founders of the Kanphata (or slit-eared) order. According to the legends told of them, Dharamnath, already famous in India, came to Kutch in search of a secluded place where he could practise his austerities. He decided to make his home under a tree near Raipur, which is on the borders of Mandvi creek. This site, now occupied only by a hamlet, was at one time a flourishing city, as its ruins testify. Finds of Indo-Parthian coins give evidence of extensive seaborne trade, although it is now very far from any navigable water. At the time when Dharamnath arrived, Raipur is said to have been ruled by a Chavda chieftain, from whom, no doubt, the famous ascetic expected the proper courtesies. Dharamnath began the twelve-year penance which he had set himself; and it was the business of his disciple Gharibnath to see to his wants. But the people of Raipur were so lacking in respect for the saint that Gharibnath's hopes of alms were disappointed; and to support his master he was obliged to cut and sell firewood, the proceeds of this just sufficing to purchase the grain needed to keep master and disciple alive. One poor woman, alone in all the city, took pity on them; and without payment baked the grain into bread,



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adding *chapatties* from her own stove when the firewood-money ran short. When Dharamnath had completed his penance, he learned what had happened, and in great wrath, after bidding the charitable woman leave the town, pronounced the famous curse *Pattan sub dattan*—‘May all the wealthy be overthrown’. Thereupon Raipur became desolate; its buildings fell; and its inhabitants removed themselves to the site which is now Mandvi. In confirmation of this story, Kutchis point out the distance which the sea has retreated from what must once have been a flourishing seaport, and add that, no doubt, Dharamnath caused an earthquake to destroy the city and dry up the creek near Raipur.

Nor is this the only occurrence which connects Dharamnath with some seismic disturbance. After shaking the dust of Raipur from his feet he sought another sanctuary, and found it on the hill of Dhinodhar, from the top of which the Rann can be seen. He began another twelve-year penance of an even more formidable kind, for it involved standing on the crown of his head, which rested on a small conical stone, supported on a stone platform. So great were the merits which he accumulated, that the gods themselves begged him to desist; but he replied that if he did so, the first spot on which his eyes fell would become barren. This difficulty was overcome by directing his gaze towards the sea to the north of Dhinodhar, which thereupon dried up, leaving vessels and marine life hopelessly stranded in the marshes which now form part of the Rann. Shortly afterwards Dharamnath descended from the hill, built the monastery below it, founded the order of Kanphatas, and departed heavenwards.

There is undoubtedly a substance of fact underlying this legend, for if, as appears, Dharamnath reached Kutch during the period of revived Chavda rule, after the disappearance of the first line of Samma princes from Kera and Padhagadh, his sojourn there, assuming that he was a real person, must have coincided with a period of marked seismic activity, which dried up the sea to the north, led to the formation of the Rann, and



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may well have had equally startling effects upon the lie of the land near Mandvi. Folk-memory would naturally associate these events with the presence of the saint, and would ascribe them to his influence—a common characteristic of the birth of a legend. Moreover, Gharibnath was certainly a historic figure, who can be dated reasonably closely; and as he became head of the Kanphatas after Dharamnath's death or departure, it seems not unreasonable to regard the latter as a historical personage of the twelfth century AD. The Kanphata tradition, however, puts the foundation of the monastery much earlier, in AD 644; while another version of the story, based upon a legend connected with Hamirji (AD 1472–1506) puts Gharibnath in the fifteenth century. But neither of these ascriptions squares with 'Ratan' Rayadhan's association with Gharibnath, which has been related on an earlier page, or with that ruler's grant being the earliest known endowment of the monastery.

Monks from the monastery still serve the small and simple temple on the summit of the hill, where Dharamnath is said to have performed his last and greatest penance. The succession of royal grants which have been bestowed upon the Kanphata order have provided the monastery itself with impressive buildings, fortified against marauders from Sind by a high wall, which encloses temples, dwelling houses, and the tombs of former *Pirs*, as the heads of the establishment are termed. The order is celibate, and newcomers are recruited either from orphans or from boys who enter the monastery from an early age as disciples of particular monks. The Pir of the day usually associates with himself two monks, from one of whom his successor is chosen when a vacancy occurs. In former times, the Pir was always invested with his robe of honour by the Ruler of Kutch; but under the new regime, his succession is merely recognized by the local authorities. The community lives simply and is extremely charitable, expending its income, which is not inconsiderable, on feeding all comers. Great fires burn under the enormous cooking-pots day and night: hospitality is never refused and at a fixed hour in the morning and again in



the evening, a bell is rung and a brother calls in stentorian tones, to all four points of the compass, that wayfarers can find food and shelter within. Strangers of high caste are given uncooked food and facilities for cooking it for themselves: others are fed in a private garden or in a large hall, according to their degree. The monks dress in ordinary Hindu style, with ochre-coloured coat and waist-cloth; the Pir wears a silk turban to denote his rank; and an ochre-coloured scarf, with a shawl and on his feet are wooden pattens. The ornaments which he wears on ceremonial occasions are of gold, and very ancient, as is the rhinoceros-horn whistle which hangs from his neck. All the monks, including the Pir, have their ears pierced (whence the name of the order) for enormous horn, glass or agate earrings, which distort their ear-lobes grotesquely. They are greatly respected for their charity and simplicity of life; and the Pir is much revered far outside the walls of his monastery. Their estates are now managed for them by the Government, and they are expected to work to a regular budget; otherwise their traditional way of life has been allowed to continue unaltered, and there is no interference with their charities, which are much appreciated in their immediate locality as well as by travellers. They pride themselves on following in the footsteps of Dharamnath, their founder, and of his successor, Gharibnath, who, they say, conferred dominion over Kutch upon 'Ratan' Rayadhan.

After the death of Rayadhan, placed by tradition in AD 1215, his territories were divided between his four sons. Dadar, the eldest, was given Kanthkot and the surrounding territory in Wagad, while Otha, the second son, who seems to have been his father's favourite, remained ruling in Lakhiarvira. Gajan was given Bara, near Tera in the west of Kutch; while upon the fourth prince, Hotha, who was by a different mother, was bestowed a special fief of twelve villages near Punari. There was, it seems, a good deal of bitter feeling over this division, and particularly over the preference shown to Otha. Kutchi tradition ascribes the bad relations, which persisted for many



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years, between the stocks of Otha and Gajan to the latter's indignation at Dadar being passed over for the possession of the family capital. As time went on, the line of Otha began to consider itself the senior branch, and transferred its capital eastwards to Ajapur, north-east of Bhuj, protected by the strong foothills of Habai. The Royal Bards of the Jadejas henceforward concentrate upon Otha's descendants, from whom the Ruling House of Kutch is descended; rather to the neglect of the lines of Gajan and Dadar. But from time to time, as we shall see, the enmities between the three main branches of Rayadhan's descendants not infrequently assumed proportions that oblige the Bards to take considerable notice of the doings of the posterity of Otha's brothers. All the three branches—Hotha's descendants seem to have been less prominent—gave birth to stout warriors, who sustained the family feud with a vigour which suggests that clan-warfare in Kutch was as bitter as anything that the Highlands of Scotland have known; indeed much of Kutchi history in the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth century finds a close parallel in the murder, pillage and arson which marked the struggle between the McLeods and the MacDonalds for the possession of Skye.

The seismic disturbances which, somewhere in the eleventh or twelfth centuries, converted the once-navigable waters to the north and east of Kutch into the difficult and treacherous Rann, introduced a period of relative isolation into the history of the country. Instead of being, as it were, a land-bridge between Sind on the west and north and Gujarat and Saurashtra from the north-east and east, it became relatively cut off from both because it was difficult of access. To it came refugees in large numbers from both sides; but it was not counted rich enough to tempt a great conqueror to occupy it permanently. When the ancient kingdom of Anhilwada was destroyed by the generals of Ala-ud-din Khilji in 1298, Gujarat became a province of the Sultanate of Delhi under an Imperial Governor. It is certain that Kutch must have paid tribute, or at any rate must have made submission to the successors of the old overlords;



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but it is also clear that Delhi exercised no effective authority in this remote and sparsely inhabited portion of its dominions. Jadeja power spread steadily through the country. It was loosely organized; and the vassals of the three main Jadeja branches occupied positions of virtual independence in their separate hill forts. But the clans could unite for certain purposes, as when they joined together early in the thirteenth century to drive out the Kathis, who thereupon migrated to the land which bears their name. The Jadejas were left alone because Kutch was not an attractive location in which to wage *jihad*, even if the Samma Rajputs had been far more bigoted adherents of the Hindu faith than their historical reputation indicates; but in fact, they were a tolerant race, among whom Hinduism and Islam appear to have been equally honoured. It was not difficult for them to approach orthodox Muslims, such as the Imperial Officials, as fellow believers, for many of their customs had been strongly influenced, in course of centuries, by Islamic practice; it was just as easy for them to reverence and worship the family deities, particularly the Goddess Ashapura, whose cult had grown up among the Sammas in days long prior to the birth of Islam; or to pay reverence to the Hindu sages and Muslim saints who honoured Kutch with their presence. The upshot was that as Kutch interfered little with the mainland; protected Muslims and Hindus alike; offered no vast prizes in treasure to attract an invader; and set up no claims of stubborn independence to offend the pride of neighbouring potentates, it was left a good deal alone.

Contacts with the mainland were not, of course, cut off altogether. When Ala-ud-din Khilji's forces broke the power of the Sumras in Sind early in the fourteenth century and destroyed their capital, Tur, he seems to have set in motion another wave of Samma and possibly of Sumra, emigrants from Sind to Kutch, who apparently fled to avoid the disturbances. There is a tradition in Kutch that a prince named Abda, a great-grandson of Gajan of the Bada line, defeated a body of Ala-ud-din Khilji's troops who had been sent across from Sind to pursue



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some fugitive princesses of the Sumra house, and successfully rescued the ladies. After the Sultan's death, both Sind and Gujarat revolted against Delhi under their respective Governors, and the Imperial authority was not restored in either until the time of Mohammed ibn Tughluk. In Lower Sind, the Sammas who had not migrated to Kutch, freed from Sumra tyranny, set up a kingdom of their own with its capital at Tatta, and their chieftain assumed the ancient title of Jam. This Sind branch of the Sammas seem to have embraced Islam more thoroughly than the branch which held power in Kutch; but in both cases, the tradition of tolerance seems to have held good. There were no 'wars of religion' between Sind and Kutch Sammas; just as there were no 'wars of religion' on Kutchi soil. The Sind Sammas seem to have found Kutch a convenient refuge when things went wrong with them, as they threatened to do when Muhammad ibn Tughluk entered Sind in 1351 in pursuit of Malik Taghi, who had successfully thrown off Imperial authority in Gujarat but had been defeated and was then a refugee in Sind. But the Sultan died on the march to Tatta; and the Imperial forces were so severely handled by the Samma forces that the danger passed away.

The next Sultan, Firuz Shah Tughluk, determined to avenge this event, and marched on Tatta with a powerful force of cavalry and elephants. He had provided himself with boats for conducting operations in the waters of the Indus delta; but his seamen were, it appears, no match for the Sindhi and Kutchi mariners. The Jam of Tatta defended himself so stoutly that the Sultan found the enterprise hopeless, and decided to retire to Gujarat—now again under firm Imperial control—to refit. On the way, he seems to have wished to punish the Kutchi Sammas, who had no doubt joined with their kinsmen in Sind to resist him. But in marching across the Rann, he encountered frightful difficulties in the endless marshy waters, and lost himself so completely that India was without news of him for weeks, while his great army suffered so many casualties that it barely struggled through. Although this was the first recorded



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occasion on which a large force had almost perished in the Rann, it was by no means the last; and the dangers and difficulties presented to intruders by the Rann, more especially on the border of Sind and Gujarat, no doubt helped to increase Kutch's reputation for remoteness. The Sultan returned next year, 1363, by a safer route, and enforced the submission of Tatta; but the Jam was shortly restored to his position on condition that he paid tribute to Delhi; and the line of the Jams of Tatta continued to uphold Samma rule in Lower Sind right into the sixteenth century. Their relations with the Kutch Sammas continued close, and it was to Kutch that the last Jam of the dynasty, Jam Firoz, fled when at length Tatta fell under the control of the Arghun princes in the time of the first Moghal Emperor Babur (died AD 1530).

From the side of Saurashtra, communications between the mainland and Kutch were easier. When the authority of Delhi began to crumble with the degeneration of Firuz Shah Tughluk's successors, the Governor of Gujarat, Zafar Khan, proclaimed himself independent with the title of Muzaffur Shah in 1396, and began to assert his power over the old dominions of Anhilwada. In 1410, he determined to 'show the flag' in Wagad, and he compelled the chieftain of Kanthkot, which was still in the possession of Dadar's line, to submit to him. There is nothing to indicate that Muzaffur Shah secured the submission of the rest of Kutch; but he had reopened the old connection between Kutch and Anhilapataka; and this connection continued when Muzaffar Shah's grandson and successor, Ahmed Shah, abandoned the ancient capital and built his new city of Ahmedabad—ever since then the capital of Gujarat. The greatest ruler of this line, Sultan Mahmud (AD 1458-1511)—called 'Bigadha' or 'Two-Forts', from his capture of the famous strongholds of Girnar and Champaner—considered that the time had come to make Ahmedabad's suzerainty over Kutch something more than nominal. He was master of Kathiawad, a great patron of merchants; and he quickly realized that the prosperity of his kingdom was bound



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up with the maintenance of law and order in coastal waters and on the high seas. Accordingly he built and maintained a powerful fleet, with which he restrained the depredations of the Kutchi and Dwarka pirates.

Whether his operations in Kutch were inspired by a determination to attack these Kutchi pirates on their home-ground, or whether he was anxious—he was a great proselytizer for Islam—to make sure that Kutch was receptive to the Muslim doctrine, is uncertain. What is definite is that in 1472 he landed with a force of 300 highly trained cavalymen in Wagad, and defeated the feudal forces, consisting mainly of archers, which he encountered. With a force so small he could not possibly have subdued the whole of Kutch by fighting: by this time almost every hill was crowned with the fort of some chieftain or other; and every village had its stone wall, which the inhabitants were always ready to defend stoutly. It is much more likely that he appeared as a gracious and mighty overlord, ready to confirm all the Jadeja chieftains in their possessions, and prepared to welcome the cadets of their line to the most splendid court in western India, where they could carve out brilliant careers for themselves by knightly prowess. He came to Kutch, in fact, as the representative of the great world outside, and as a pillar of orthodox Islam, ready to receive new converts and to provide instructors for those Muslim Kutchis who were benighted in the old Karmathian heresy. He showed himself conciliatory to the great Jadeja houses. He took back Kama Bai daughter of Hamirji of Lakhiarvira, eighth in descent from Otha, to his splendid harem in Ahmedabad: along with her went her natural brother Alia. But the Sultan did not ignore the rival Bada line in distributing his favours. Lakho, eighth in descent from Gajan, who was a famous warrior, attracted the Sultan's attention by his bravery and skill in arms: Sultan Mahmud bestowed upon him estates in Amaran and Gondal to give him his chance. These estates were occupied by chiefs who resisted the authority of the Sultan. By conferring them on Lakho, the Sultan was killing two birds with one stone—



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favouring the Jadeja prince and enlisting a stout fighter against his own enemies. But out of this gift sprang one of the most famous feuds in Kutch history.

Lakho, after hard fighting, won possession of his new fiefs, and consolidated them into an estate which he renamed Halar, after an ancestor who had been the son and immediate successor of Gajan, the founder of the Bada branch of the Jadejas. But in the process of expelling or killing the original occupants he started several blood feuds with their families. One of these was to have dramatic consequences. It seems that in the beginning of the sixteenth century, Lakho decided to visit his ancestral home and while making his way to Bada, passed through the possessions of the Lakhiarvira branch. Being no doubt reluctant, because of the bad feeling between the branches, to ask them for hospitality, he halted in a village owned by some Sanghar Rajputs not far from the fort of Habai. While he was sheltering there, he was murdered by desperate men who had followed him from Halar to avenge the wrongs which their families had suffered at his hands. Lakho's son, the famous Rawal, blamed the Lakhiavira branch for his father's death, and swore vengeance against the head of the family, Hamir—who had succeeded his father Bhim in 1472.

Hamir is notable, not only because he sired Khengar I, the first of the Jadeja line to unite the whole of Kutch under Jadeja rule, but because it was in his time that the Goddess Ashapura, who had for centuries been regarded as the family deity of the Jadejas, became in a very special way associated with the fortunes of the senior branch as patroness and protector. Under what circumstances Hamir first sought the Goddess's help we do not know, but after he had succeeded in the enterprise for which he had invoked her favour, he made a pilgrimage to her temple at Modh, conferred liberal grants of lands and villages on the custodians of her shrine, and elevated their head to the rank of Raja, with the privilege of remaining seated in the presence of the ruling family, and of being first called upon by its reigning prince. To this day this privilege is



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observed. The Maharao of Kutch, when he visits 'Modh of the Goddess Mother', first pays his respects to the Raja, who remains seated upon his throne of state. When the time comes for the Raja to return the courtesy, his throne is carried with him; and it is seated on that throne that he receives the Maharao in the Maharao's own house.

This temple at Mata-no-Modh, sixty miles from Bhuj, is among the most sacred and most famous shrines in Kutch, and is served by an ancient monastic order known as Kapdis, whose origin is lost in antiquity, and whose records perished when they fled in 1762 after the forces of Kutch were defeated in the battle of Jhara. But tradition says that the temple was located in a spot which the Goddess had indicated to one of the sons of Mod in a dream: he was to search for a stream, on the banks of which he would find some grain of an unusual colour, with a cocoanut and other objects. Two pious Bania brothers were entrusted with the search: they were successful, and built a small temple in the locality indicated. The favour of the Goddess was shown by divine music, played at night without human hands: and it was conveyed in a dream to the brothers that the shrine must be closed for six months, at the end of which time the Goddess would have manifested herself in tangible form within. Because of the pious over-zeal of one of the brothers, the shrine was opened too early, with the result which is still apparent—the Goddess's form remains partly, but only partly, emerging from the substance of a great block of living rock, six feet square. The effect is impressive in the extreme, as though the image of the Goddess were in the process of emerging into view through some natural convulsion of the rock. That her worship is extremely ancient is clear from the circumstances of her ritual—strong drink is offered as a libation, and cast over the image: until recently, seven male buffaloes were sacrificed with rites which bear all the marks of a very primitive origin. The Kapdis, like the Kanphatas, are a celibate order, given to charity and hospitality, and with a strict discipline among themselves to ensure that Raja succeeds Raja



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without dispute. They carry on their traditional observances without interference from the new Government; but their estates are managed for them, and they now work to a budget.

Hamir's devout worship of the Goddess who presides over this ancient and remarkable monastic community, was to have considerable consequences for the history of Kutch. He had to face the bitter enmity of his kinsman Rawal, who contrived also to enlist against him the support of Dada, at that time the head of the Kanthkot branch of the family, whose main seat was at Rapur in Wagad. In 1506, it seems, Rawal professed to wish for a reconciliation of family differences. He invited Hamir to visit him at Bada, where, he proposed, the head of all three branches should meet and sink their differences. Hamir, knowing that his own family was quite innocent of the murder of Rawal's father Lakho, and possibly underestimating the intensity of Rawal's hatred, was none the less suspicious; but allowed himself to be lulled in security when his particular patroness, the Goddess Ashapura, was invoked by Rawal as witness to the good faith of the invitation. Rawal employed a subterfuge which is still remembered. He concealed a live sparrow in the fold of the waist-cloth which Jadeja nobles wear, and laying his hand on the sparrow as though upon his own breast, swore to the Goddess by the life beneath his hand that he meant no harm to Hamirji. The Goddess was not deceived: Hamir was fooled.

Hamir went to Bada; but as he entered the banqueting hall to take part in the feast of reconciliation, he and his suite were cut down by the clansmen of Rawal, and slain to the last man. According to tradition, they put up a desperate resistance, selling their lives dearly. Among those who fell was Jam Hamirji's drummer, cut down defending his master to his last breath. As he collapsed upon the floor, covered with deadly wounds, he set his sword as a barrier to prevent the blood which he had shed from mingling with that which was welling from Jam Hamirji's body. 'My blood must not mix with my Prince's,' he gasped, before he died. His heroism was not for-



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gotten. When Rao Khengar, after conquering the Bara Kingdom, set up the mausoleum, still to be seen between Bara and Tera, in memory of his murdered father, the drummer was honoured with a *palia* just as were the knights in Jam Hamirji's train who perished with him. And so long as the State of Kutch remained independent, the descendants of that same drummer enjoyed the privilege of leading each and all the great ceremonial processions which wound their way through the streets of the capital on festive occasions.

Rawal's plans were carefully laid; he had made arrangements to wipe out the whole of his victim's family. The eldest, Alia, who was illegitimate and did not rank for the succession, lived in Ahmedabad and could simply be ignored. But the three younger sons, of the true blood, Khengar, Sahib, and Rayib, must be seized immediately, if the bloody work was to be completed. Khengar and Sahib, although they had been invited to Bada, did not go; they were staying with an aunt at Vinjan, to the west of Mandvi: while Rayib—too young to count—was out of reach staying with another aunt at Virawal. It was vital for Rawal to seize Khengar, who was eleven, and the heir, together with his younger brother Sahib, nine years old. Accordingly a hot pursuit was organized.

The story of the escape of Khengar and Sahib from the vengeful arm of Rawal is one of the most famous epics of Kutch, and its details have been handed down at great length in Bardic tradition. They could hope for no refuge in Kutch; Dadar in Wagad was an ally of their foemen; none of their murdered father's vassals would dare to shelter them now that Rawal had seized the headship of the Jadeja clan. Their only hope lay in fleeing to Ahmedabad, in the expectation that Sultan Mahmud Bigadha, their overlord, might listen to their grievances.

A faithful servitor, Chaccha Butta by name, had accompanied Hamir to Bada, but, becoming suspicious, had fled before his master was cut down. He made his way to Vinjan, and somehow procured a camel on which the two boys could ride. The



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little party, dressed like beggars, slowly made their way into Wagad, but when they got to a village named Shapur, near Rapur, they found that the pursuit was catching them up. They were befriended by the village watchman, Bian Kakal, who despatched Chaccha Butta to keep out of sight in the hills, and hid the two young princes in a haystack. But Rawal's men had tracked the camel; they knew that the refugees were in Shapur. Bian Kakal, as the leading man, was sternly interrogated. When he denied all knowledge of the princes, his own seven sons were brought out from his house. Each time he refused information, one son was beheaded. Their mother watched dry-eyed, saying: 'We are the Rao's dogs: we have many sons. But a lion has few cubs'. The constancy of the village couple wore down the fury of Rawal's men. Sickening of the slaughter, they spared the seventh and youngest son, but fired the village, and were about to burn down the haystack in which the princes were sheltering, only desisting when they were told that if they did so, the cows would starve. But they thrust a spear into the stack, wounding Khengar. Like the soldier at the taking of Guntri long ago, he uttered no cry but used the same ruse of wiping the bloody blade of the spear upon his garments, so that when it was withdrawn it gave no clue to the searchers.

On the following day, the two princes and Chaccha Butta began to cross the perilous Little Rann, passing seven deep channels on the way, and all but perishing in the dangerous marshes. Most of their journey had been made under the cover of darkness to avoid pursuit; but when morning came, they reached the comparative safety of Chadava, in Dhrangadhra territory. As they were resting near a tank, a Jain *saddhu* passed by, and regarded them closely. He shuddered, and resumed his way. Chaccha Butta, suspicious that he was a spy, drew his sword and bade him explain on pain of death, why he had shuddered. The *saddhu* replied: 'Either all that I have been taught is wrong, or these two poor waifs are of the blood royal, and one will be a famous monarch'. Chaccha Butta lost his



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fear, and told the *saddhu* who the boys were. The *saddhu*, whose name, Manek Mirji, is famous in Kutch history as the first of the line of gurus (teachers) of the monastery of Moti Poshal, guided the little party to his temple, saw to their needs, and entertained them for the night. When they took their leave on the morrow, the *saddhu* presented Khengar with a light, beautifully-balanced spear of steel, telling him that with it he would do great deeds. That spear, an ideal weapon for a boy approaching his teens, is still reverently preserved among the treasures of the Moti Poshal monastery in Bhuj, although few foreigners have seen it in its actual sanctuary, from which it is brought out from time to time on great festivals.

The *saddhu* blessed the princes, and warned them that they should enter Ahmedabad only on a steed or in a carriage which was either black or white in colour. They made their way to Daisra in Morvi, and were resting in the market place, when a carpenter's wife who hailed from Kutch recognized them, and rushed to her home, saying that two princes of Kutch were there in Daisra. She and her husband invited them to their home to rest. Standing in the yard was a black horse, and when they saw it, the party remembered the *saddhu's* advice. They would not wait for the woman to cook a special meal for them; they ate the *Jowah* porridge which she had ready and drank *dahi* (butter-milk). Chaccha Butta mounted the two princes on the black horse; and thus they entered Ahmedabad.

They sought out their half-brother Alia, who welcomed them, and, on his advice, did not approach the Sultan immediately for fear that he might not be willing to help them at the cost of offending such a powerful vassal as Rawal had now become. Khengar and his brother entered a military academy, where for three years they received a knight's training, and learned the use of weapons. Both became accomplished horsemen, and each had his own steed.

When Khengar was fourteen, he saddled his horse, and joined himself quietly to a royal hunting-party without invitation, taking his place among the retainers. As it happened,



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a lion suddenly charged the Sultan's elephant, and before anything could be done, clawed its way up the beast's back to the level of the howdah where the Sultan sat. The royal huntsmen and the nobles were afraid to loose their arrows at the lion for fear of hitting the Sultan; but Khengar, spurring his horse within range, cast the *saddhu's* spear so accurately and to such good effect that the lion, pierced through eye and brain, rolled dead to the ground. Amidst the confusion and congratulations which followed the Sultan's escape, Khengar cut off the ears and tail of the lion, put them in the hollow of his shield, and quietly disappeared in the crowd. The Sultan, who had seen the whole thing, but did not recognize Khengar as one of his own men, decided to hold a *darbar* next day to honour his rescuer. In the full assembly of the nobles and retainers, Sultan Mahmud asked who the boy was who had killed the lion. Many young men tried to claim the honour; but the Sultan refused their appeals for reward, saying that the boy had been a stranger to him; moreover the unknown lad had taken the lion's ears and tail; anyone who could produce these would be recognized as the Sultan's rescuer.

Hearing of this, Alia and Chaccha Butta decided that the moment had come to make the princes known. They took the boys to the Sultan who, as soon as he caught sight of Khengar, carrying the ears and the tail of the lion, exclaimed, 'Ha! You are my big Rao', rose from the throne, and embraced him. When the Sultan asked what reward he wanted for saving his life, Khengar said that his only wish was to recover his kingdom, and could he have Morvi as a base of operations? The Sultan agreed at once, enobled Khengar with the title of Rao, and allowed him to go to Morvi immediately; sending with him two experienced soldiers and a contingent of Syeds, the best fighters in his own army. (Again it is worth noticing how easily the Kutch ruling house, in spite of their devotion to the Goddess Ashapura, made themselves entirely acceptable to an orthodox Muslim Sultan and to his Muslim soldiery, who had for long been the scourge of Rajput princes on the mainland.)



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Rao Khengar and his brother, with the Sultan's soldiery, remained in Morvi for about a year, perfecting their plans and organizing lines of communication with Kutch. During the four years of Rao Khengar's absence, his enemy, Rawal, had continued to seize most of the possessions of the Lakhiarvira branch. He deprived all Rao Khengar's kin of their lands, drove out the Hothi Rajput chieftains who had settled in the territory of Otha's descendants, and even expelled quite humble squires who had been vassals of Lakhiarvira from time immemorial. For these deeds he was greatly hated; and a large body of opinion in favour of the return of Rao Khengar was built up both among the landholders and the common people. Moreover, his sacrilegious behaviour in breaking his oath to the Goddess Ashapura was widely known; it was rumoured that the Goddess had appeared to him in a dream, warning him that he had put it out of her power to show him any favours in Kutch, and that if he desired her further support, he must cross the seas to Kathiawad, where she would again help him. This rumour did much harm to Rawal; it persuaded most people in Kutch that however great might be his valour, and even his apparent success, his rule in Kutch could not last.

Rao Khengar, from his strategic base at Morvi, kept on attacking the territory of the Kanthkot-Rapar branch of his family—which was still siding with Rawal—in Wagad. At that period, the Rann could be crossed by determined parties of men on foot, though the passage was perilous; it is even said that lions from Kathiawad sometimes crossed into Kutch this way. At last the Rao got a secure base in Wagad, and set up his headquarters at Shapur, where the six lads had died to save him, renaming it Raopur to commemorate his escape. His next step was to advance against Rapur, the main city of Wagad. Rapur was then held for Dadar by Abra, one of his line; and Rao Khengar apparently had hopes of coming to terms with Abra and obtaining permission to settle some followers there. He sent a deputation to Rapur, consisting of his natural brother Alia, and the chief of the Hothi clansmen, who was connected

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with Abra by marriage. A quarrel broke out, in which Alia was killed by Abra's men; and the Hothi chief returned unsuccessfully to Khengar. After a time, Khengar's forays into Wagad became so bold that he accumulated much booty. Abra, anxious to share in the spoil, agreed to allow Rao Khengar and some of his followers to move their base to Rapur, outside the walls of the fort, on condition he received a fourth share of everything that their raids brought in. It was further agreed that no blood feud should lie on account of Alia's murder. But Rao Khengar had not forgiven Abra. One day Abra was incautious enough to accept an invitation to take food with the Hothi chief, his kinsman, who was among the Rao's followers. Abra and his son left the fort, and entered the Hothi camp. Abra was killed by Rao Khengar; his son was cut down just as he was on the point of re-entering the stronghold. Rapur, along with most of Wagad, fell into Rao Khengar's hands.

Rao Khengar used small bands of seasoned warriors to extend his conquests; the local levies whom he encountered were no match for the veterans trained by Ahmedabad methods, especially as the Rao was welcomed wherever he went. There followed some years of bitter fighting with Rawal, now the main opponent; in the course of which Khengar captured Anjar, and used it as an advanced base against the Bada forces. He was a merciful conqueror, he was stern in battle but clement in victory. Unlike Rawal, he confirmed the vassals of his opponent in their holdings in return for their submission to his authority; so that the verdict of the landlords, as well as of the common people, turned more and more in his favour. At length Rawal, finding that all his valour could do little to retrieve his fortunes, began to listen to those of his followers who advised him to make the best of a bad job and seek his fortunes elsewhere. Accordingly, he and his henchmen made their way from Mundra across the Rann to Kathiawad, where he founded the great dynasty of the Jams of Nawanagar.

With the departure of Rawal, Rao Khengar was the undisputed master of Kutch; he is considered, with some justice,



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the real founder of the fortunes of the present Ruling Family. For some time, he made his capital at Anjar, but after about seven years, he decided to make his headquarters in a more central locality, and decided upon Bhuj, the ancient Tahej, overlooked by Bhujia Hill on which is situated the very old snake-temple. The place had fallen upon evil days, and the country round about was full of brigands and freebooters. The Rao drove them away, established firm order, and largely restored the prosperity of the city and the strength of its old fort. It was in Bhuj that the Rao set up the monastery of Moti Poshal at whose head he appointed Manek Mirji the *saddhu*. Manek Mirji was the first of the line of *godjis* (or gurus), which exists to this day in the beautiful sixteenth century buildings which Rao Khengar constructed. These *godjis* are learned custodians of Royal history: under their care the Royal Bards receive instruction in the oral tradition. They are also the hereditary custodians of Rao Khengar's spear and of the exquisite rock-crystal jewelled image of the Goddess Ambaji which Manek Mirji brought with him when he arrived to take up his duties as first of the *godjis*. Each *godji* has his cap of maintenance, whose shape preserves the semblance of the ears and tail of the lion which Rao Khengar slew, and in the centre of the cap is still to be seen the jewel which Khengar himself presented to Manek Mirji.

In spite of his victories, Khengar had to be constantly on his guard against Rawal's partisans in Kutch. There were some pockets of these, in Mandvi and other places, on which his clemency could make no impression, and the Rao's sword was rarely sheathed for long. But a good deal more dangerous were the effects of Jam Rawal's intrigues in Sind. There were still Samma rulers in that country, and Rawal found little difficulty in stirring up enmity against Rao Khengar among them. After Jam Rawal's departure to Kathiawad, Rao Khengar began to establish posts across the Rann to protect himself from possible attack from Sind: he occupied positions at Rahim Bazar and Virawal. Quarrels broke out among the Jams of



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Tatta; and Rao Khengar seems to have intervened in Sindhi politics to weaken any possible danger from that quarter. He advanced a force into Sind in support of one claimant, Mir Jafir; and secured for him an independent territory at the cost of some fighting. When the Jams of Tatta were overthrown by the Arghun dynasty in 1520, Rao Khengar's intervention in Sindhi affairs brought him some trouble. Sultan Shah Hussain, finding that the last Jam, Firoz, had fled to Kutch and was appealing to Rao Khengar to restore him to Tatta, followed the fugitive to Kutch, inflicted upon Rao Khengar one of the worst defeats in his career at the first Battle of Jhara, and obliged him to expel Jam Firoz to Gujarat. Shah Hussain did not occupy Kutch; he seems to have been more concerned to prepare for a contemplated attack on Gujarat. But he was himself attacked by the Emperor Humayun, who was in flight from Sher Shah and this upset his plans. For some time, too, Gujarat was in no condition to interfere with Kutch. Sultan Mahmud Bigadha had died in 1511: in 1526 his equally able grandson, Bahadur, came to the throne. He became too deeply involved in troubles with the Imperial power in Delhi to take much interest in Rao Khengar, who was thus able for some years to go his own way without much reference to what was happening either in Gujarat or in Sind.



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THE Kutchi people are fully justified in regarding Rao Khengar with the respect which only an almost legendary figure can inspire. Apart altogether from his epic struggle to gain the throne, he ruled, reckoning from the crowning at Rapur in 1510, for seventy-six years, dying at the ripe old age of ninety in 1586. Moreover, although Jam Rawal's hostility continued for years after he removed himself to Kathiawad in 1540, it was exercised at long range from Nawanager; and inside Kutch, Rao Khengar had no serious rival. His security at home is shown by his adventures into Sindhi politics. As has been pointed out, he somewhat burned his fingers and there is no record that he had much to do with that country for the rest of his life. The Emperor Humayun's unsuccessful efforts to conquer Sind from Shah Hussain led to a certain amount of anarchy there, which lasted for half-a-century until the Emperor Akbar, who had himself been born in Umarkot, finally subdued Mirza Jani Beg, the ruler of Tatta, and united Sind with the Delhi empire as one of its regular *Subahs*. But this did not happen until 1592, six years after Rao Khengar's death: meanwhile Sind was impotent to interfere with Kutch: and after the Imperial rule was established in Sind, it was too well-controlled to do so until the Moghal Empire broke up.

On the Gujarat side, also, Rao Khengar's long reign saw



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many changes. His ties with Ahmedabad were at first close; without Sultan Mahmud's shelter and help he could never have gained his throne. He owed Sultan Mahmud and his successors as his feudal overlords both for the fief of Morvi, which he retained, and for Kutch itself. There is evidence in *Mirat-i-Ahmadi* that the tribute for Kutch took the form of a knight-service of 5,000 men ('Jadeja Khengar, zamindar of Bhuj, with 1,409 villages, serves with 5,000 horse'). Whether this tribute was in fact either demanded or paid is not clear; for the line of Sultan Mahmud soon ran into troubles which would deter them from unduly taxing the friendship of so powerful a feudatory Prince as Rao Khengar had become. Sultan Muzaffar Shah II of Gujarat, Sultan Mahmud's son, became involved in an exhausting war with Chitor; this was carried to a triumphant conclusion by his son and successor Bahadur Shah. Bahadur Shah, however, quarrelled with the Emperor Humayan, who drove him into temporary exile. When the Emperor himself became a fugitive before the Afghan Sher Shah, Bahadur recovered Gujarat. He seems to have left Kutch entirely alone while he was reoccupying his possessions; and before he completed the process of organization which might have included the exercise of effective suzerainty over Rao Khengar's kingdom, he was drowned in a skirmish with the Portuguese at Diu in 1537. After his death there was a period of confusion; as in Sind later, it was the Emperor Akbar who ended it by finally conquering Gujarat in 1573.

This event, unlike what was to happen in Sind, was of importance to Kutch, for it involved Rao Khengar in the politics of the mainland and brought him into contact, for the first time, with the Moghal Empire. The Emperor's rapid movements, his obvious intention of subordinating the whole of India to Delhi, and the formidable forces of which he disposed, were creating consternation among rulers who had hitherto enjoyed independence. It must have been plain to a Prince of Rao Khengar's long experience that the fortunes of Kutch now depended largely upon keeping the goodwill of the



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Moghal Empire. At the same time, Kutch's isolated position; its comparative lack of resources; the reputation of its inhabitants for tough resistance, and Rao Khengar's own fame as a warrior, no doubt inclined the Imperial Governors of Ahmedabad to rest content with a mere acknowledgment of the Imperial authority. There is no record that the customary tribute was regularly paid, or that the knight-service of 5,000 men was ever exacted in Rao Khengar's time; although the fee of Morvi on the mainland doubtless contributed its quota to the Imperial Treasury at Ahmedabad.

Abul Fazl describes Kutch in the *Ain-i-Akbari* (1583-1590) as a 'large separate territory', noting the barren and sandy aspect of the country, the excellent breed of horses, and the good camels and goats. He describes the chief as being of the Yadu or lunar race: his clan, the Jadejas, are handsome, tall and bearded. Their military force is 10,000 cavalry and 50,000 infantry; but Abul Fazl does not mention what, if any, contingent the chief was obliged to furnish. The chief resides at Bhuj (written Tahej) and there are strong forts at Jharah and Kanthkot. The expulsion of Jam Rawal and the foundation of Nawanagar are briefly mentioned—as is the fact that Nawanagar is called 'Little Kutch'. The Jam of Nawanagar has 7,000 cavalry and 8,000 infantry. The prime ministers of Kutch and Nawanagar have been of the Muslim faith for a considerable period.

It is plain that neither Abul Fazl nor his informants knew very much about Kutch, except by hearsay; indeed the substance of his description might almost have been taken from Al Biruni nearly six centuries earlier, with the exception of the passage dealing with Jam Rawal. He does not even mention Rao Khengar, or the changes which had come over Kutch in his lifetime, although he mentions the ruling Jam of Nawanagar, Sato, by name. This looks as if Abul Fazl may have derived his information about Kutch from Nawanagar sources.

Rao Khengarji's long reign, like that of Queen Victoria three centuries later, bridged two eras. It linked the older India,



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in which armed power on land counted for everything, with the India in which European sea-power was destined to play an ever increasing part. The young Prince Khengar was two years old when Vasco da Gama reached the coast of Malabar by way of the Cape: and before Rao Khengar died full of years and honour, he had seen Portuguese influence steadily grow in the waters which had for centuries been the preserve of vessels from India and from the Arab countries. While he was still at Ahmedabad, he must have heard reports of the early Portuguese settlement at Diu after the failure of Sultan Mahmud Bigadha to drive them off the seas with the aid of the combined fleets of Egypt and of the Hindu ruler of Calicut in 1509. Portuguese power by land and sea increased; the death of Bahadur Shah in a quarrel with them removed their most formidable local opponent. By 1555, the Portuguese were strong enough to sack Tatta, after fighting had broken out because of the piracies conducted from the ports of Sind. Their influence with the Muslim authorities in India largely depended on their control of the sea which the pious must cross to perform the Haj pilgrimage to Mecca. When the Emperor Akbar conquered Gujarat in 1573, he found it prudent to make a pact with the Portuguese Viceroy to ensure the safety of pilgrims from India.

No information has been preserved about the relations between the Portuguese authorities and the Kutchi seamen, who were at this period among the most skilful and daring mariners on the west of India. Both Portuguese and Kutchis were interested in peaceful trade, and the reputation for piracy which the Kutchi ports had enjoyed not long before seems to have died down. Certainly there is no record of any Portuguese attack on the Kutchi ports; and the Portuguese were growing so high-handed at sea that they would certainly not have left the seaboard of Kutch unmolested if it harboured pirates who interfered with sea-borne traffic. Probably the Portuguese and the Kutchis went their separate ways without molesting each other; but the Kutchis must have been glad to see



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Portuguese pride lowered when in 1612 one English ship, *Dragon*, assisted only by a pinnace, defeated a Portuguese fleet of four large galleons and a score of frigates. After that, the Portuguese left the British alone in their little settlement at Surat; but made a great effort to impress the Imperial Government with their own power by seizing three ships full of goods and people belonging to the Emperor. The Moghal authorities took stern action against the Portuguese by land, but could do nothing against them on the sea; this, no doubt, was the main reason why, when the Emperor Jahangir toured Gujarat in 1617, he made himself particularly affable to the only Prince who could give him the kind of help that he needed—the Rao of Kutch.

Rao Bharmal I, son of Rao Khengar I, had succeeded his father peacefully in 1586. He seems to have done much to encourage the growth of Kutch's overseas trade, and Kutchi power in the Arabian sea rose to notable prominence. He must have been equally formidable by land. The Emperor Jahangir who met him in 1617, noted in his *Memoirs* that the Rao always had five or six thousand horsemen in his service and that in time of war he could double this number. Whether because this power gave him confidence, or because he lacked the element of prudence which Rao Khengar had always mixed with his daring, Rao Bharmal at first managed his relations with the Moghal authorities in Gujarat rather badly. These authorities were quite content with a nominal submission on the part of Kutch; but submission of some kind they would have; and any claim to independence brought instant reprisals. Trouble seems first to have broken out in 1590, when the ex-King Muzaffar III of Gujarat, with the support of the Jam of Nawanagar, tried to rebel against Aziz Khan Koka, the Imperial Viceroy. The Moghal troops were too strong, and Muzaffar, after losing Junagadh, the last stronghold which supported him, fled to Kutch and threw himself upon the mercy of Rao Bharmal. The Rao seems to have deemed it his right to protect the fugitive and to defy the Moghal authorities.



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But they confiscated his fief at Morvi and inflicted defeats on him in 1590 and 1591—whether on Kutch soil or not is not clear. The upshot was that the Rao had to submit to the Viceroy's demands; to hand over ex-King Muzaffar and to acknowledge Moghal overlordship. He was then given back Morvi and confirmed in his position, and the tribute of knight-service was only demanded occasionally. In 1609, however, the Rao had to send his son, with 2,500 men, to serve with other feudal contingents from Gujarat at Ramnagar in Dharampur: so that the submission exacted in 1591 proved, on this occasion at least, something more than nominal.

Tod has a curious story in his *Western India* about Rao Bharmal's surrender of ex-King Muzaffar. According to him, the Emperor Akbar considered that Rao Bharmal had acted in unknighly fashion by giving up Muzaffar: and therefore ordered two *palias* to be set up outside one of the gates of Delhi. One of these *palias* commemorated Rao Bharmal's action: the other commemorated a stiff fight which the chieftain of Bet had put up in defence of the ex-King. Passers-by were ordered, according to Tod, to ignore the first, and to garland the second. Tod says that the practice lasted until the time of Rao Desai I (1719–1752) who successfully petitioned for the removal of the *palias*. There is no confirmation of the story from any other source; and although a whimsical action of the kind is not wholly out of keeping with the Emperor Akbar's character, it seems unlikely that he would in effect have encouraged resistance to the orders of his own Viceroy of Gujarat by such behaviour. Further, if the *palias* were in fact ever set up, their speedy removal would have been essential to Rao Bharmal's reputation; and they certainly would not have survived the meeting with the Emperor Akbar's son, the Emperor Jahangir, at which such friendliness was shown to the Rao, and in which the Emperor deliberately enlisted the Rao's sea-power for the protection of Haj pilgrims.

It was in 1617, when Rao Bharmal had been on the *gadi* for thirty-two years, and must already have been an elderly man,



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that he met the Emperor Jehangir at Ahmedabad. The Emperor was paying a state visit to Gujarat, and all the important feudatories of that region assembled to pay their respects to him. The Rao brought a large retinue and splendid presents, which the Emperor lists in his *Memoirs*—a hundred of the highly-valued Kutchi horses, each worth from two to three thousand rupees: one hundred gold *ashrafis*: and two thousand rupees. The last item was no doubt a customary *nazar*: the others were special gifts. The Emperor and the Rao were no doubt favourably impressed with each other—certainly the Emperor thought very well of his guest. In addition to presenting him with the *sarapai*—the dress of honour conferred by the Moghals on men whose position they desired publicly to recognize—Jehangir gave the Rao his own horse, a pair of elephants, a dagger, a diamond-hilted sword, and four rings. More important still, he conferred upon the Rao the right to strike his own coins—an extremely rare privilege for a feudatory of the Moghal Empire, and the beginning of Kutch's separate *Kori* currency which was maintained unbroken until 1948. But the crowning favour of the Emperor to the Rao was the total and permanent remission of all tribute from Kutch in return for the Rao's promise to give pilgrims to Mecca free passage in Kutchi ships. It says much for the sea-power of Kutch at this time, when the Portuguese were doing their best to embarrass the Moghal Empire by interfering with the pilgrim traffic, that the Emperor should have been satisfied with this bargain. The Rao, too, had reason to be well pleased. So long as the Imperial power remained effective, his exemption from tribute made him virtually independent of the Viceroy of Gujarat. The interview with Jehangir, and its sequel, represent the climax of the success of Rao Khengar's line in their struggle for effective independence. The Rulers of Kutch, it is true, continued to owe allegiance to the Moghal Empire; but this allegiance was unaccompanied by any obligation to pay tribute.

Rao Bharmal I died in 1632, five years later than the Em-



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peror who had shown him so much favour, and was succeeded peacefully by his son Bhojraj, who reigned until 1645. History has nothing to relate about Kutch during his period of rule; but in the reign of the next Rao, Khengar II, Bhojraj's nephew, the relative isolation into which the country had fallen was interrupted by a reminder of the troubles through which the Moghal dynasty was passing. In 1645, the year when Rao Khengar II ascended the *gadi*, the stern and ambitious Prince Aurangzeb, third son of the Emperor Shah Jahan, was appointed Viceroy of Gujarat. He did not hold the charge for very long, since he was recalled after a little more than a year to undertake military operations in Badakhshan. There is no record that he ever met the Rao; but the familiarity which he then acquired with conditions in Gujarat was to stand him in good stead thirteen years later, when he was hounding his elder brother Prince Dara Shikoh to his death. Prince Dara Shikoh, after being defeated by Prince Aurangzeb in the struggle for the throne, was pursued through Delhi and Lahore to Sind. From Multan he went to Tatta; then broke back eastwards in an endeavour to retrieve his fortunes. The forces which he still had with him suffered terribly in crossing the Rann; but in Kutch Rao Tamachi, who had succeeded his brother Rao Khengar II in 1655, welcomed him kindly, and assigned him a residence at Bhuj in the garden which is still called Darawadi. The Prince would not stay: he had heard that in Gujarat he might find a welcome; so after a short rest in Kutch he pressed on to Ahmedabad, where the gates of the city were opened to him. In Gujarat he might have built up a base for carving out an independent kingdom for himself in the Deccan, where Aurangzeb was hated. But Aurangzeb succeeded in tempting him north by arranging for feigned promises of help from some of the Rajputana Princes: and in 1659, Dara Shikoh was again in flight. Aurangzeb had sent messages to the Rao and to all the important Princes in Gujarat and Kathiawad that no assistance must be given to Dara Shikoh. The fugitive Prince came to Jamnagar, and was told that he could not stay.



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He again sought refuge in Kutch, and was again courteously received, but was informed that no armed support be given to him. This time he left Kutch for ever, again crossing the Rann to Sind with terrible losses among his few followers. At last he met his end by treachery as he was attempting to cross the Bolan Pass into Iran. There is no evidence that Rao Tamachi's kind reception of Dara Shikoh was ever held against him by the Emperor Aurangzeb.

Before Rao Tamachi died in 1666, Kutch became the home of another, and more fortunate, refugee, the famous saint Shah Murad of Bokhara. He had been expelled from his country by Russian influence, because he had urged the Muslim leaders of Central Asia to resist the steady advance of Imperial Russia. After wandering for some time, Shah Murad decided to make Kutch his home, because he had been received there with great honour by everyone, from the Rao downwards. He lived for many years in Mundra, where he is buried; and he has become the great patron saint of Kutchi fishermen and pilots, who invoke his aid when danger or difficulty overtakes them. But before he died, he was able to render signal service to the country of his adoption.

During the reign of Rao Rayadhan I, who succeeded Rao Tamachi, the Viceroy of Ahmedabad, Muazzim Beg, made a determined effort to collect tribute from Kutch. Exactly why he did so is not clear; but Sivaji, the great Maratha leader, was at this period beginning his destructive raids on Gujarat, and the Ahmedabad Treasury may have needed all the resources which could be collected from every quarter. It is obvious that Muazzim Beg must have known of the terms of the agreement of 1617 between the Emperor Jehangir and Rao Bharmalji I; and there is no hint in any of the contemporary authorities that Kutch had failed in the obligations undertaken on behalf of the Haji pilgrims. But the Viceroy nevertheless advanced on Kutch, no doubt crossing from the Kathiawad side, in sufficient strength to make effective resistance difficult. The Rao's men stood to arms, but they would have had small chance of



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success against the Moghal veterans. At this point Shah Murad intervened on behalf of Kutch. No doubt he was able to testify that the Kutch authorities were rendering valuable service to Islam by the facilities which they were giving to pious pilgrims; and his own weight of sanctity made it difficult for the Viceroy to persist with his intention against the saint's entreaties. The upshot was satisfactory to everyone except Muazzim Beg, who was obliged to retreat peacefully after recognizing formally Kutch's exemption from tribute.

After the death of Rao Rayadhan I in 1698, there followed the first case of disputed succession since the days of Rao Khengar I. For more than a century, rightful heir had succeeded rightful heir on the *gadi*; and the country had profited greatly by the resulting freedom from dynastic feuds. Rao Rayadhan I had eleven sons: his eldest son, Noghan, had died young; while Rava, the next Prince, had met a violent end—it is said, by the contrivance of the third son, Pragmal. Both Noghan and Rava had left sons with claims which were superior to those of Pragmal according to the ordinary rules of succession among the Jadejas; but Pragmal, with the help of his able and ambitious son God, determined to supersede them. Before his father Rao Rayadhan died, Pragmal had already succeeded in building up a strong party among the *bhayyads* and military officers in his favour. To stage his *coup*, he made use of a stratagem which is still remembered—and, indeed, still continues to influence the ceremonials which mark the death of the head of every Ruling House among the Jadeja clan. On the pretext of 'eye' illness, Pragmal did not join the procession of his brothers and nephews which accompanied the body of the late Rao to the burning *ghat*. He remained in the fort with his partisans. He then seized the treasury, manned the guns, and closed the gates of the city upon the returning party. In this way, he made himself Rao, at the expense of those whose claim was better. Until quite recently, it was customary, when a Jadeja Prince died, for the rightful successor to remain in the Palace or fort of the capital, while those whose claims are less



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direct go forth in procession to take part in the actual funeral ceremonies outside the city. The last succession in Kutch did not follow this rule.

Rao Pragmal's seizure of the *gadi* had unhappy consequences. It broke up the unity of allegiance which, since the day of Khengar I, had kept all the *bhayyads* and great landholders loyal to the Rao as head of the State. Before Rao Pragmal succeeded, he had been obliged to buy the favour of those whose support he needed by gifts of land which weakened the central authority: and his numerous relations also required lavish grants as a price of their allegiance to him. For example, Halo, the son of Noghan, and the rightful heir, had to be bought off with the grant of the important coastal town of Mundra. The effect was to create a number of petty principalities, each enjoying its own revenue and its own jurisdiction, in place of the single feudal kingdom which Khengar I and his successors had carefully built up and preserved. Nor did the consequences end there. When Rava's son Kayan grew up, Rao Pragmal was obliged to acquiesce in his seizure of the old fief of Morvi which Rao Khengar I had received from Sultan Mahmud Bigadha and which had remained in the hands of Rao Khengar's dynasty ever since. This concession did not placate Kayan, who ranks as the founder of the independent State of Morvi. Almost every year, he contrived to launch an attack upon Rao Pragmal's territory. He was usually beaten off, because the Rao was too strong for him. But in one of these incursions he established himself so securely in possession of Katharia, in Wagad, that even the heir-apparent, Prince God, was unable to dislodge him; and he and his heirs remained, until 1948, in possession of what came to be called the Adhoi enclave—an island of Morvi territory in the middle of Kutch. It endured, an offence to all Rao Pragmal's successors, until the middle of the twentieth century, when Kutch and Morvi alike passed under the jurisdiction of the Delhi Government.

In spite of these setbacks, Rao Pragmal's reign was successful, and the alteration in the normal rule of succession to the *gadi*



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which his usurpation had brought about proved permanent. His reputation was much enhanced by the military operations which resulted in the restoration of Jam Tamachi, sixth in descent from Jam Rawal, to the *gadi* of Nawanagar. Jam Tamachi was expelled from his kingdom by a rival faction: in spite of the traditional ill-feeling between the Jadeja rulers of Kutch and Nawanagar, dating from Rao Khengar's day, he appealed successfully to Rao Pragmal for help. Aid was forthcoming in effective form. The Rao despatched his heir apparent, Prince God, with a strong force to Nawanagar, and Jam Tamachi was restored to his kingdom. From that time, Rao Pragmal assumed the title of Maha Rao; and he and his descendants are thus described in the Kutch annals.

In 1715, Maharao Pragmal died, and was succeeded by the heir-apparent, Prince God. During the lifetime of his father, the new Maharao had proved himself a man of exceptional ability, as well as a fine soldier. Had he lived longer, he would have ranked extremely highly among all who have ruled Kutch. In his short reign of just under four years, he had already begun to undo some of the damage which Maharao Pragmal had involuntarily inflicted upon the fortunes of later Rulers of Kutch. He resumed the estate of Mundra which had been alienated to Halo: he also resumed Kanthi and Anjar Chovisi. This resumption of Crown grants, which would no doubt have been carried further if Maharao God had lived longer, was not confiscatory in nature, because those who had occupied them were encouraged and assisted to found new villages and to bring under cultivation tracts which had hitherto been untilled. In this way the foundations were laid for a period of prosperity which is among the happiest epochs in Kutch history.

The Maharao died in 1719, and was succeeded without opposition by the heir-apparent, Desal. Maharao Desal I is among the best-loved of Kutchi Rulers: his name still stands as a synonym for affability, benevolence and success. So popular was he that the proverb 'Desal and God are the same' was for long on the lips of his subjects; and many are the stories which



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illustrate his love of justice and his care for the poor. Some, no doubt, are apocryphal; but even to-day the people of Kutch like to tell how Maharao Desal would break off his meal to settle a quarrel between humble shoemakers: how he detected an attempted fraud upon a poor farmer by holding up against the bright sunlight a bond whose cancellation-mark in ink had been so cleverly removed by the dishonest creditor that it defied scrutiny in ordinary light, and had been made the basis for a second claim.

It is significant that Maharao Desal should figure in folk-lore as the Ruler who inquired about the sanctity of the Jakhs, and was granted the crowning revelation of their appearance in the market place. He was the spiritual disciple of the great saint Mekad Dada who, in his younger days, specialized in rescuing people who were dying of thirst in the terrible wastes of the Rann. Mekad Dada's dog, Motia, would scent out the sufferers; his donkey, Lalia, would follow afterwards, bearing the precious water, and leading the revived travellers to the shelter where the saint would care for them. Mekad Dada is the St Christopher of Kutch, the patron saint whose blessings assure a safe journey: and when he became the *guru* of Maharao Desal, everyone in Kutch knew that their ruler fully deserved the blessing which had come to him. But the popular stories which describe the relationship between Maharao Desal and Mekad Dada are far from representing the Maharao as a simple-minded and credulous person. From time to time he is shown as exhibiting a healthy scepticism—as, indeed, he does in the Jakh story. For example, when Mekad Dada had taken up his duties as the Maharao's spiritual adviser, the Maharao heard that a lady was residing with the saint. Anxious to inform himself about a situation which was causing gossip, the Maharao once presented himself before the saint's lodging at midnight. He was forthwith admitted, but found the saint, in the shape of a tiny infant; reverencing the lady as his mother. The saint rebuked the Maharao: 'We are ascetics: you are a King. Please never come and test us like this in our *ashram*: you



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disturb our meditation'. The Maharao asked how he could receive advice in his difficulties if he observed this instruction: Mekad Dada told him to set up an idol, with appropriate ceremonies, at a particular place in Bhuj. This idol, under the guidance of the saint, would answer any questions which were addressed to it before eight o'clock in the morning, and would convey to the Maharao the advice of Mekad Dada on any difficult matter. The place where the idol used to reside, near Naga Chakla, is still remembered: but the story goes that some mistake in procedure was made which, after a short time, prevented the method from working well, so that the Maharao had to resort directly to Mekad Dada again.

The association of Maharao Desal I with popular religion, which stories like these illustrate, was a great strength to him. It ensured him the active support of religious orders like the Kanphatas and the Kapdias, as well as of the Muslim religious foundations which he held in equal favour. Since his popularity with his *bhayyads*, his other tenants-in-chief, and his ordinary subjects was also great, he found himself at the head of something like a united Kutchi nation. This situation was the more fortunate because the Moghal Empire, under whose capable, if rather remote, protection Kutch had for so long been sheltered, began to break up rapidly after the death of the Emperor Aurangzeb in 1707. Not long after Maharao Desal's accession, he was confronted with a real danger of the kind which Kutch had not known for almost a century. The Viceroys of Gujarat at Ahmedabad were becoming more and more independent of Imperial authority; increasing difficulties with the Marathas constantly emptied their treasuries. It was only a matter of time before they turned to Kutch—now prosperous enough to attract outside attention—to relieve their difficulties.

The possible danger from this source had not escaped the attention of the rulers of Kutch. The walls of Bhuj had been strengthened and pierced for artillery. This work seems to have been begun by Maharao God I, whose name is linked with it; but Maharao Desal certainly added to it and probably com-



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pleted it. It was in Maharao Desal's early years that the hill of Bhujia, crowned with its snake-temple, was fortified as a further aid to the defences of the capital. The top was surrounded by a parapet wall, with outworks to include possible points of vantage. The building of these defensive works on Bhujia hill is popularly associated with the name of Maharao Desal's able minister Devkarān Seth—the first of the famous *Diwans* who, from this time onwards, play a prominent part in Kutch history. In actual fact, Bhujia hill was already fortified before Devkarān Seth became Diwan in 1730, as the incidents of the fighting in that year prove. But even if he did not begin the fortifications, he certainly strengthened them when he took office. The first crisis took place nearly nine years before he entered the Maharao's service. About 1721, two years after Maharao Desal had come to the throne, a powerful expedition from Gujarat, under the command of Nawab Kesar Khan, came to Kutch to demand tribute. The force carefully avoided the fortifications, fearing their strength, but plundered widely through the Abdasā region, sacking Nalia and other open towns. As many people as possible withdrew into the strongholds of Bhuj and Mandvi with all their goods, and the raid seems to have been disappointing in its results. The Muslim historians claim that the Viceroy's force defeated the Maharao and compelled him to pay a substantial sum; but there is no record on the Kutch side that the Maharao's and the Viceroy's armies ever clashed. It seems far more probable that the Maharao, because he had been on the throne too short a time to organize effective resistance, either avoided contact of any kind with the invaders, or hastened their return to Gujarat by building a golden bridge behind them. In any event, Maharao Desal knew what he had to expect from this time onwards. Even so, the seriousness of the crisis which burst upon him seven years later seems to have surprised him. Sarbuland Khan, who became Governor of Gujarat in 1723, found himself obliged to submit to Maratha claims to tribute over the province. Anarchy spread fast. Gujarat was ravaged by competing armies: to restore his



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fortunes, Sarbuland Khan decided to make a full-scale conquest of Kutch in 1730. Thakore Kayan of Morvi, who was still alive, offered Sarbuland Khan a handsome reward if the line of Pragmal were ousted and his own claims to the gadi of Bhuj were recognized.

By taking Thakore Kayan with his expedition, Sarbuland Khan no doubt hoped to detach from Maharao Desal a considerable amount of support: for in the eyes of many people, the Morvi chief was the rightful representative of Rao Khengar I. But he underestimated the popularity of Maharao Desal, not only with the Jadeja *bhayyads*, but also with the *girasdars* who belonged to the Vaghela and other clans, and with the turbulent and hard-fighting Miyanas. Moreover the Maharao's patronage both of Hindu and Muslim dignitaries and religious foundations had brought the influence of both faiths to his support. Sarbuland Khan, with a force of 50,000 men crossed into Kutch, probably from the Morvi side and with the assistance of Morvi guides familiar with the fords across creeks. Even so he seems to have found the passage of the Rann difficult and dangerous, because Muslim historians, in explaining his subsequent defeat, give as the two main reasons the difficulty in crossing the Rann and the failure of supplies.

Sarbuland Khan's overwhelming force no doubt gave him confidence, and correspondingly depressed the Maharao and his advisers. The difficulty in Bhuj was money: without money no feudal force could be held together for very long. No one knew how to raise the sums needed. But one of the Maharanis, whose private fortune had greatly increased under skilful management, offered her wealth, and the services of her manager, to the Maharao. The Maharao sent for the manager, a Lohana named Devkaran Seth, and asked him if he could help the State in the dangerous crisis which had arisen. The Seth at once offered to do everything necessary if he were given authority. Maharao Desal accordingly appointed him Diwan. With the help of his caste-fellows Devkaran Seth speedily raised enough money both to keep the feudal levies together, and to attract



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every fighting man in Kutch to the defence of the capital. Moreover, he provided plenty of opium; and *saddhus* of various sects, who regarded the Maharani's cause with particular favour, were easily persuaded to assemble in large numbers, and to put their great physical strength at the Maharao's service, by the prospect of enjoying the stimulant which was their main temporal relaxation.

The defence-forces were divided between the tasks of guarding Bhujia fort and protecting the city, the new walls of which were not entirely finished. The day after these preparations had been completed, the Viceroy's army appeared. The Moghal forces fiercely attacked the fort, and a storming-party commanded by the Viceroy's nephew carried two bastions by assault. But the next day, the garrison made a determined sally, in which many *saddhus*, fighting stark naked, side by side with the Jadeja knights, played a conspicuous part. The Moghal forces were driven out, after desperate fighting, with the loss of their commander. As soon as the news of this success reached the Maharao, who was commanding the army which defended the city itself, he headed a charge of some thousands of his best horsemen into the heart of Sarbuland Khan's camp. The whole Moghal army fell into confusion, and abandoning any further effort to assault either Bhujia fort or Bhuj city, retired to Lakhona. They were immediately followed up, and mercilessly harassed by the Jadeja and Miyana cavalry, who cut off supplies, continually raided the camp, and reduced the Moghal forces to great straits. Thakore Kayan lost heart, deserted his allies, and sought pardon from Maharao Desal—who, with his usual clemency, readily granted it. The loss of the Morvi party was most serious to Sarbuland Khan; without their guidance he could hardly hope to bring his forces safely back to Gujarat. Nor, indeed, did he succeed in so doing. He escaped himself to Radhanpur but his army suffered enormous losses from the close pursuit of the Kutchi horsemen and from the notorious hazards of the Rann..

The successful defence of Kutch against so strong a force of



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invaders added greatly to Maharao Desal's reputation and for the remainder of his reign, which lasted effectively until 1742, although he did not die until 1752, he set himself to build up a sound economy along lines suggested to him by Devkaran Seth. The Diwan acquired great ascendancy over his master, whose ruling passion became, with increasing years, the accumulation of wealth. Devkaran Seth was shrewd enough to let the revenues of the Maharao's private estates accumulate, while meeting the administrative expenses out of new sources of income. All this was done without any increase in taxation; the traditional business ability of the Seth community was very profitably applied to the direction of public affairs. The extension of the cultivated area was encouraged by making loans to farmers through Government agents, familiar with the locality, who were appointed for every important town. The fortifications of Bhujia hill were improved: the wall round Bhuj was completed: the defences of Anjar, Mundra, and Rapar were put in order, and these towns were garrisoned by paid full-time troops, who patrolled the surrounding countryside and suppressed dacoity. In order to safeguard the commerce of Kutch, the pirates who had made Okhamandal their base were put down, and their future good behaviour was secured by building the fort of Kutchigadh in their neighbourhood. The fact that this was kept garrisoned and efficiently maintained on the other side of the Gulf, shows the strength of Kutch at this time. It was even found possible to recover Balammbha and some other places in Halar. Further, the nuisance of small raiding-parties from Sind, who stole across the Rann and plundered in Kutch, was dealt with by setting up a post in Parkar to restrain the Sodha tribesmen: and by garrisoning the old port of Rahim Bazar. The effect of all these measures, it is said, upon the prosperity of Kutch was so remarkable that the Maharao's assured income reached nearly two million koris; while Devkaran Seth made nearly half as much as this for himself.

The position of the Maharao of Kutch up to the time of



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Maharao Khengarji III of Kutch as a young man, painted by Hall at
the command of Queen Victoria

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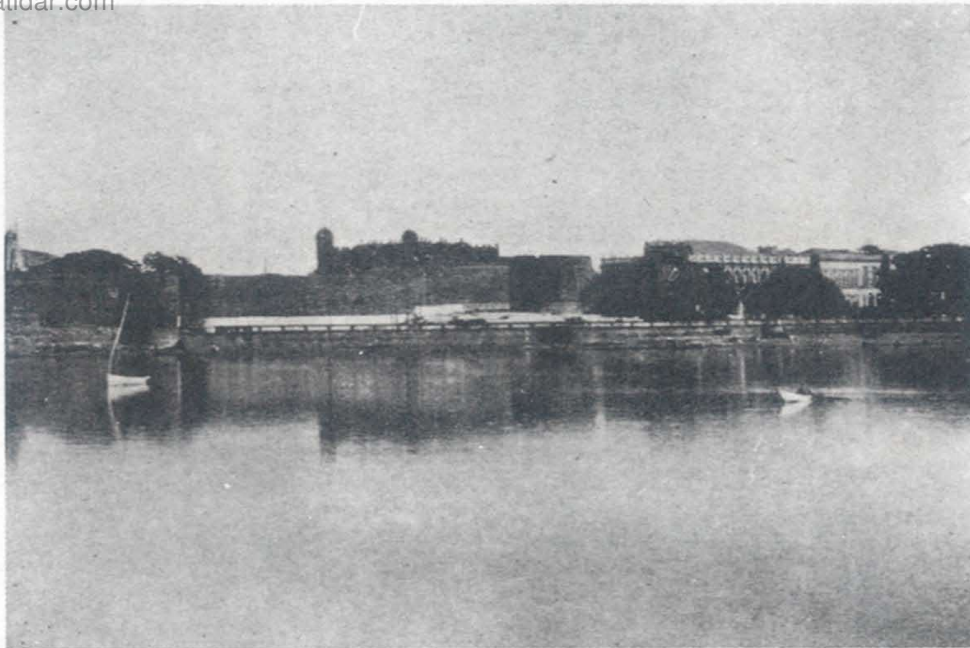
~~The hill fortress of Ehujia above the modern city~~

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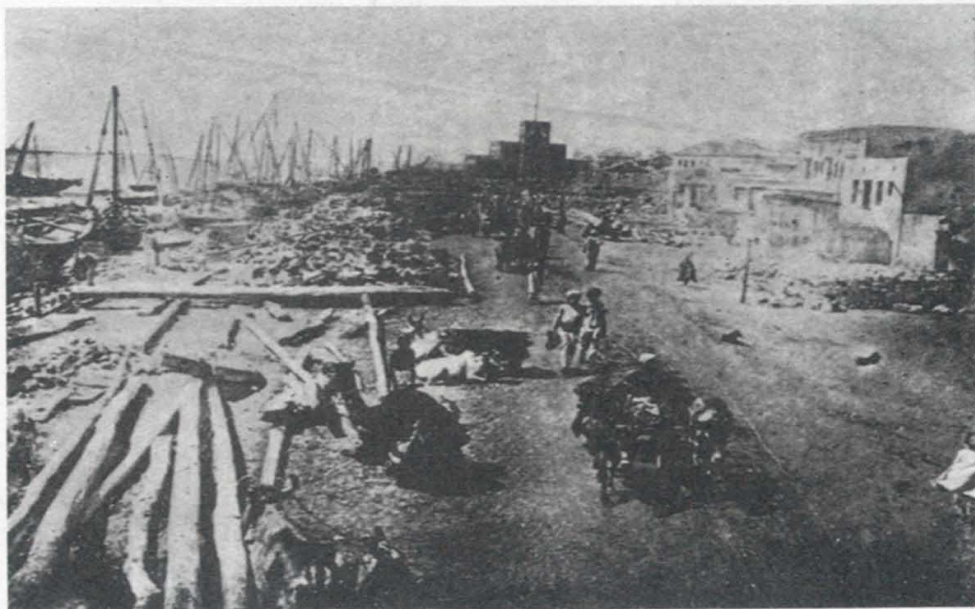


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The lake and the city wall of Bhuj

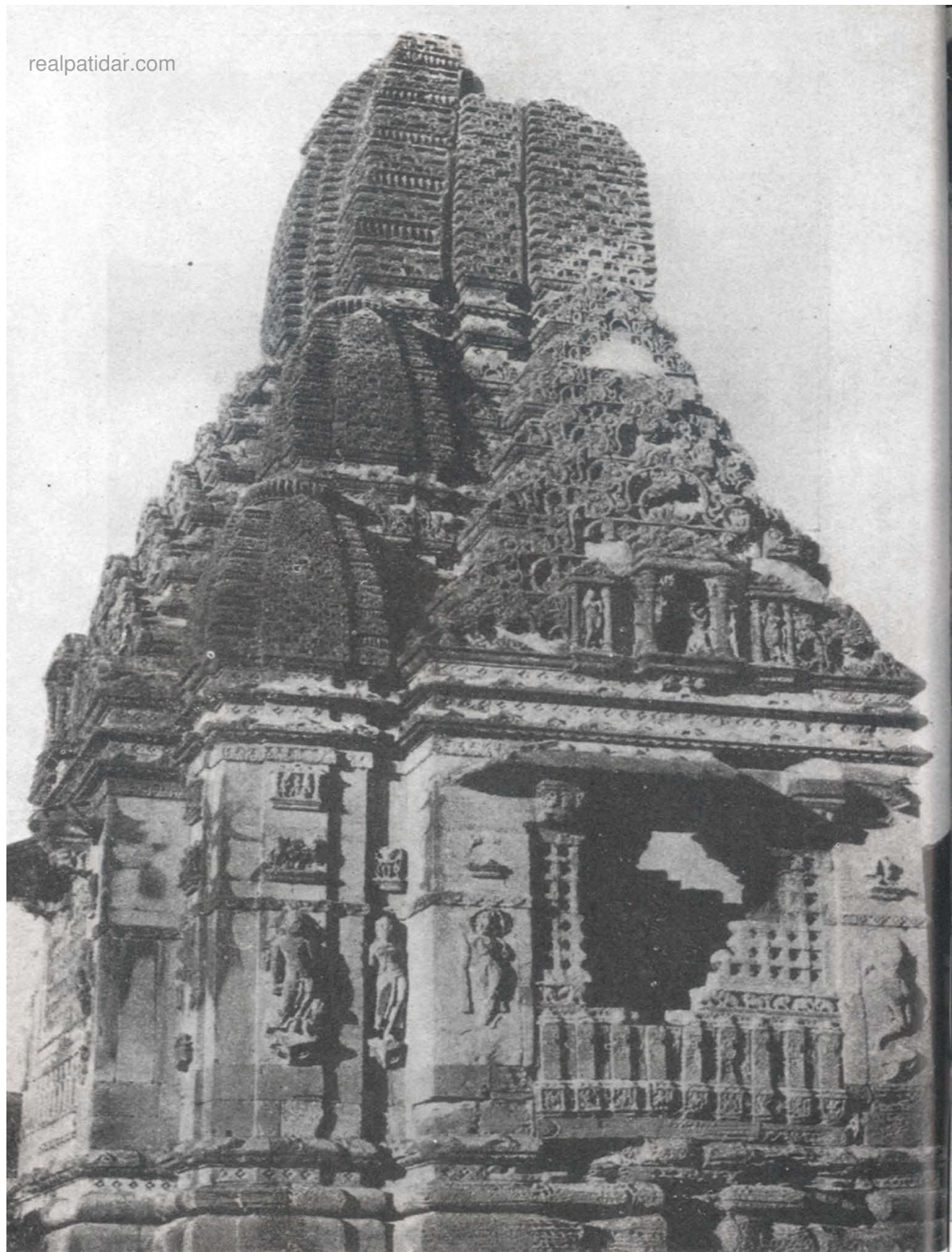


An old photograph of Mandvi Port

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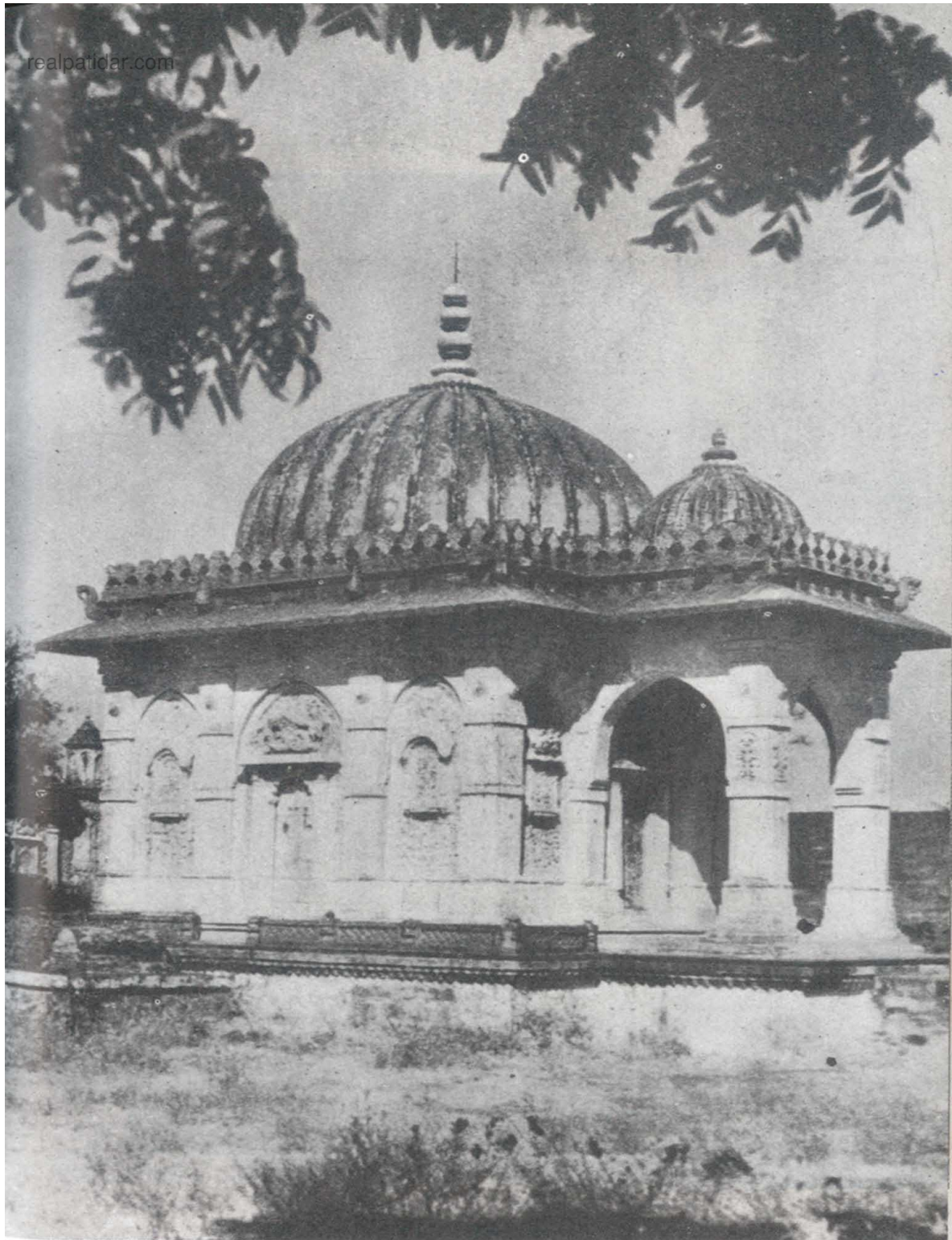
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The temple at Kera, Lakho Fulani's capital

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The tomb of Jen adar Fateh Mohammed at Bhuj

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The Royal Chhatris outside Bhuj

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Warrior from Jam Hamirji's Chhatri

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Jam Hamirji's Chhatra
near Tera



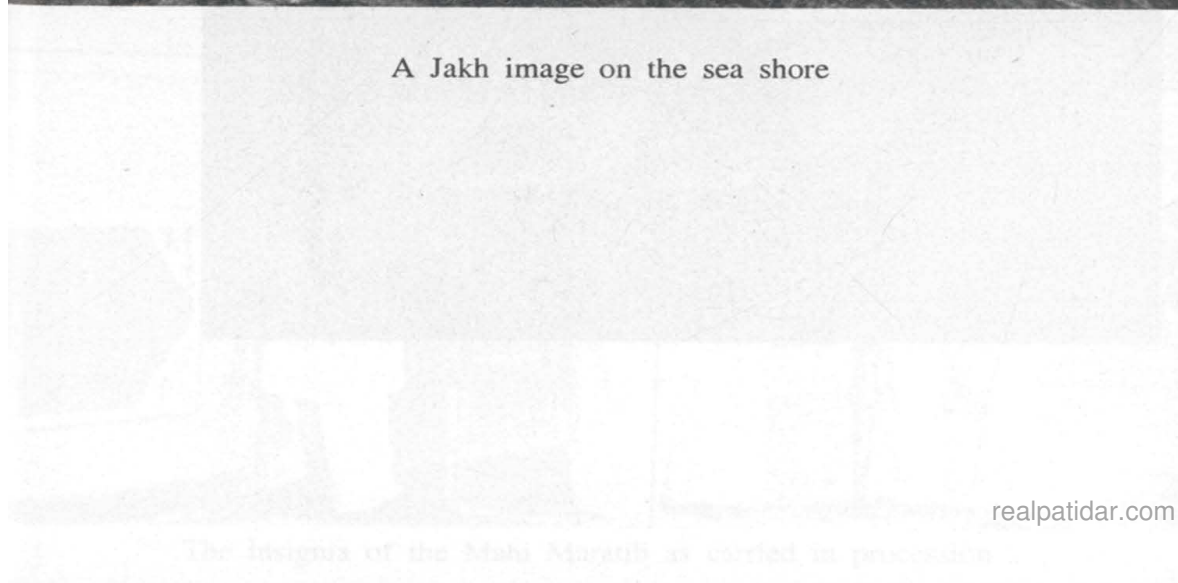
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A Jakh image on the sea shore





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Jakh images



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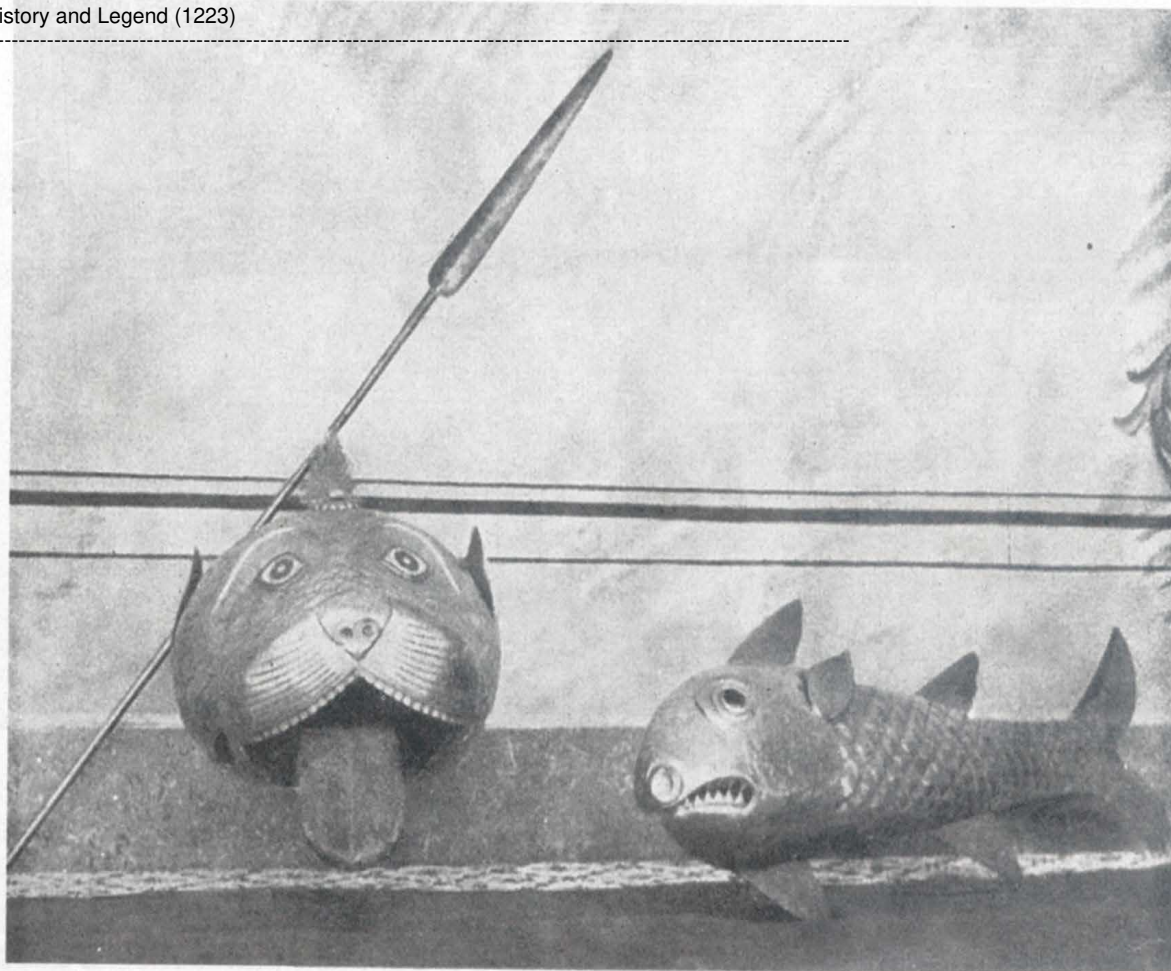


The insignia of the Mahi Maratib as carried in procession



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The insignia of the Mahi Maratib, showing Rao Khengarji's spear



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A tapestry panel from the Aina Mahal

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Another piece of tapestry in the Aina Mahal

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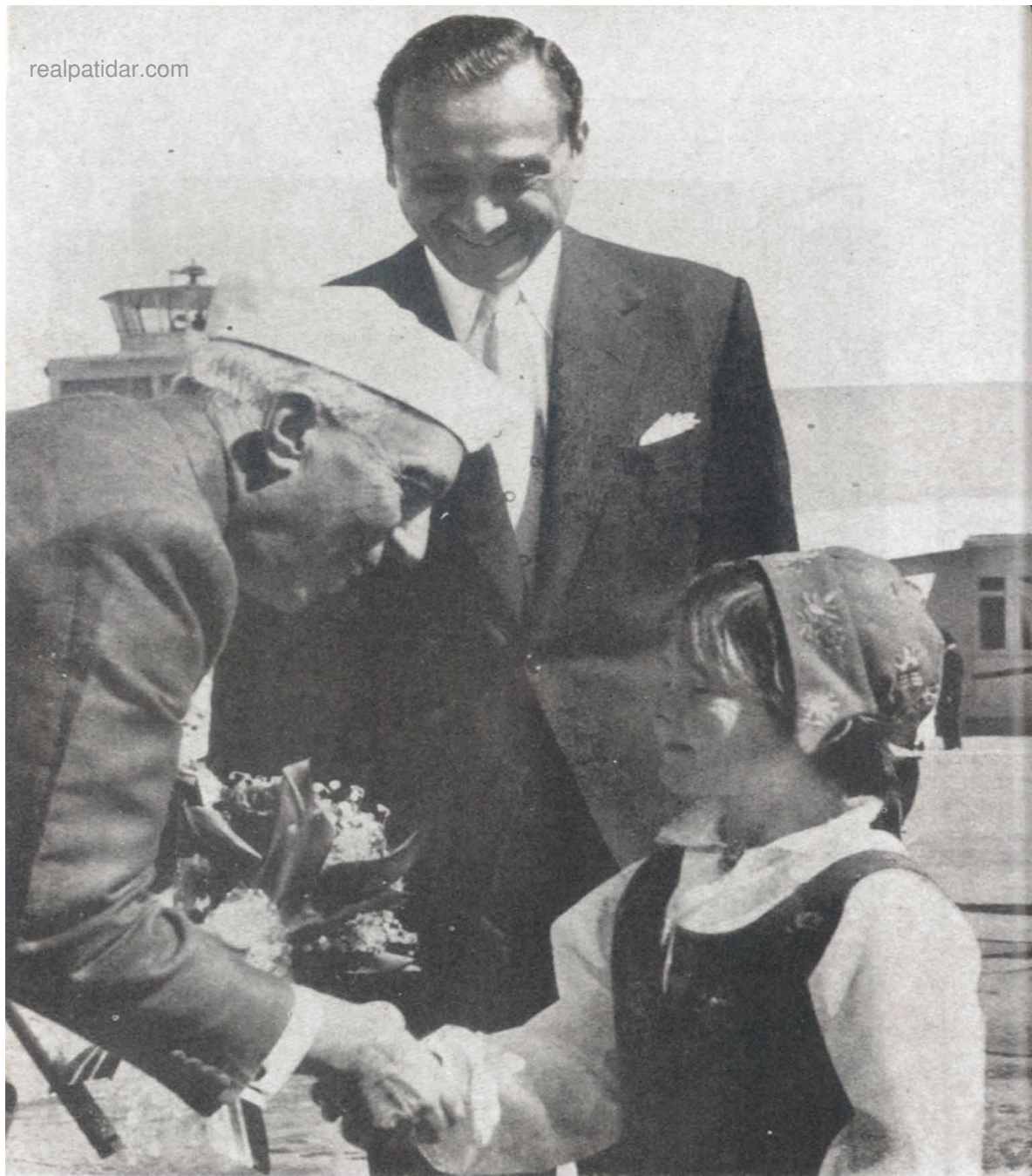


The main gate of Tera Fort

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Pandit Nehru and the present Maharao of Kutch, His Highness
Madansinhji, at present Indian Ambassador to Norway
(This photograph was taken at Oslo in 1957)

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RAO KHENGAR'S LINE

Maharao Desal I closely resembled that of the chief of a Highland clan in Scotland. The Maharao was head of the Jadeja Rajputs: to him the Jadeja barons who were his nearer or remoter relatives owed allegiance and duty. But his power over them was limited, because they too had their own estates and their own source of revenue—which, reckoned together, were larger than his own. Moreover, they exercised private jurisdiction inside their estates, so that the Maharao did not even enjoy the ordinary profits of justice in their *jagirs*. The Maharao was entitled by custom to certain feudal dues from the Jadeja *bhayyads*, as well as to their military service for the defence of the country, and to the customary *nazrana* on specified occasions. In addition, he had certain customary rights over chiefs who were not Jadejas—Vaghelas, Miyanas, and other landholders, many of whom had been in occupation of their holdings from times prior to the Jadeja occupation of Kutch. But the monetary value of all these customary feudal dues was small; and the only substantial revenue upon which the Maharao could rely came from his own family possessions. These included the ports of Anjar and Mundra, lands in Kora, Rapar and Kanthi in Wagad, and certain other holdings. This revenue was quite sufficient for his own needs; but wholly insufficient to maintain anything like an administrative machine. Yet the prosperity of Kutch, the welfare of the people, and, indeed, the general preservation of law and order, came to depend more and more upon services which only the Maharao's Government could supply. From all of these services, his Jadeja clansmen, his other feudal chiefs, and the people at large derived great benefit. Yet they made no real contribution to the costs.

As the eighteenth century went on, the position became more and more impossible. Maharao Desal I realized this clearly, and no doubt it is the explanation of his anxiety to amass financial reserves which would give him the means to develop his own resources and thus make himself more independent of the goodwill of the *bhayyads*. In order to achieve this aim, he relied more and more upon Devkaran



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Seth; and this opened the way for a breach with Prince Lakho, the heir-apparent, who resented the eminence which the all-powerful Diwan had attained. There were darker rumours also: Devkaran Seth was suspected of undue familiarity with Prince Lakho's mother, the Maharani whose manager and confidant Devkaran Seth had been before he entered the Maharao's service. The Prince had a fine reputation as a soldier: his skill and bravery had played a notable part in the defeat of Sarbuland Khan in 1730: yet there was no place for him in Kutch so long as Devkaran Seth and the Maharao shared all the power between them. Lakho, as is customary with heirs apparent everywhere, began to form a party of his own among the younger *bhayyads* and among all those who had any reason to dislike either the Maharao or the Diwan. It was to the interest of this party to foment bad blood between father and son, and between Lakho and the Diwan. The Prince was ostentatious, free-handed, and inclined to extravagance—qualities which contrasted with the solid, if less engaging traits of the Maharao, who may have begun to outlive some of his original popularity with his adoption of habits of extreme economy. The clash came when the Maharao cut down his son's personal allowances. In disgust, Prince Lakho left Bhuj, and announced his intention of taking service with the Maharana of Udaipur.

A reconciliation was arranged: Prince Lakho returned, and his allowances were restored. But he had now formed the opinion that Devkaran Seth was his implacable enemy, and he determined to remove him. There was no lack of willing assistants: the Diwan's long spell of power had excited much jealousy. A riot was staged outside the Seth's house: as soon as he sallied out to discover the cause, he was cut down by an assassin. So died a notable administrator, who had done much to bring his master's resources to a level at which they could sustain the burden of providing Kutch with at least the elements of a governmental machine.

The murder of Devkaran Seth took place in 1738: three years later the master whom he had served so well was deprived



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of authority. It is uncertain whether Prince Lakho had from the first planned to seize the throne, and had arranged for the assassination of the Diwan as a step towards his principal objective; or whether he discovered that, so long as his father retained power, there was a danger that his enemies would persuade the Maharao to avenge the crime if opportunity should offer. The Prince's immediate followers, who could not claim the immunity which the blood-royal conferred, would doubtless press for the Maharao's deposition to protect themselves from the consequences of the deed. Whatever its immediate motives, the *coup* was long and cleverly planned, and executed without bloodshed. Prince Lakho approached his father so humbly, and begged for forgiveness with such earnestness, that the Maharao was persuaded to pardon him; and outwardly normal relations were restored between father and son. Two years had passed: the Maharao was lulled into security. At last he consented to attend an entertainment at his son's house, along with all his immediate circle of courtiers. Prince Lakho, at the head of a large band of his adherents, received his father with every mark of respect, and ushered him into the dining hall. No food appeared. After a long delay, and the issue of repeated orders, Prince Lakho excused himself on the pretext of finding out why the dinner was so long in arriving. As he left the hall, the doors were shut, and the Maharao and his adherents were seized and bound. As soon as they had been effectively secured, Prince Lakho assumed full powers, while the Maharao was confined to his quarters, but was not otherwise molested.



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7

THE MIRZA MAHARAOS

MAHARAO LAKHO was thirty-four years old in 1741, when he deprived his father of authority; but Kutch historians do not date the beginning of his reign until 1752, when Maharao Desal died. In fact, however, he became the ruler at once: and the change-over took place so quietly that it must have been generally welcomed as well as carefully prepared. Lakho's authority was everywhere recognized; only at Mandvi was there some hesitation before the commandant of the garrison changed his allegiance. Before long, the Prince's position was so strong that he felt able to allow his father all reasonable freedom and a suitable establishment in which the Maharao lived and died peaceably: but Desal's *entourage* was broken up, and his principal courtiers were sent, but without any other restraint, to distant parts of Kutch. The bursting treasury, which Lakho controlled, no doubt helped to persuade many of those who might otherwise have questioned the displacement of the father by the son; but some of the *bhayyad*, secure in their forts, were less complacent. Thakor Sumra, of Tera in Abdasa, was particularly outspoken, and Lakho determined to bring him to heel. The rest of the *bhayyad* and vassals were summoned, and a force, well supplied with artillery, was sent against Tera. There was nothing unusual about this procedure: Tera fort was strong, and no one expected anything much to happen to



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THE MIRZA MAHARAO

Thakor Sumra, who would doubtless apologize in due course and be forgiven. But an unexpected element was introduced into the situation by Lakho's artillery. This was the product of the new cannon-foundry set up, along European lines, by the famous engineer Ram Singh Malam, whose skill Lakho had been quick to recognize. The damage inflicted upon Tera fort by these weapons was so great that its fall seemed inevitable. The *bhayyad* became alarmed. If a small difference of opinion with the Maharao was punished in this way, what would become of other Jadeja chieftains? Accordingly, they threatened the gunners (who are said to have come from outside Kutch) that they would be killed if they maintained such a devastating fire. The siege then took the course sanctioned by custom: the walls of the fort remained intact, and (no doubt after an apology had been made) the forces of Bhuj withdrew.

Maharao Lakho, commonly called 'Lakhpatji', was a man of considerable ability and vision, who has left his mark upon the history of Kutch. He has been sharply criticized by Kutchi writers for his extravagance and for his capriciousness; but there is little doubt that he deliberately decided to create the institutions of a formal court at Bhuj in order to demonstrate the difference between a Maharao of Kutch and even the most powerful and wealthy of the Jadeja *bhayyad*. He kept great state and his ceremonial *darbars* were splendid occasions. He was clever enough to realize that the Moghal Empire, even in its decay, was still recognized as the fount of honour; and in 1757, by emphasizing Kutch's traditional services to the Haj pilgrims visiting Mecca, and by making judicious presents of the famous Kutchi breed of horses to the shadowy Emperor Alamgir II, then reigning, but not ruling, in Delhi, he obtained the royal title of Mirza Maharao, and the coveted, ancient insignia of the Mahi Maratib, the premier decoration in the gift of the House of Timur. There can be no doubt that these marks of Imperial recognition, of the kind conferred only upon reigning sovereigns, were valued by the Maharao mainly for reasons of purely local prestige. It is true that he went through



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the motions of intervening in Sindhi—and hence of all-India—politics, by announcing preparations for an attack on Tatta, (now part of the empire of Ahmad Shah Durrani), after securing promises of support from the Peishwa and the Gaikwar, who welcomed the prospect of a diversionary attack upon their great rival. But Maharao Lakho was by this time too infirm, and probably too prudent, to undertake such an adventure seriously; and nothing came of it.

The great natural intelligence of the Maharao was shown by his curiosity about the outside world and what was happening there. He welcomed foreigners at his court, and his hospitality was always open to travellers from foreign countries. Fortune brought to him a man after his own heart in the person of that remarkably versatile genius, Ram Singh Malam whose abiding influence can still be traced in so much that is characteristic of Kutchi architecture, enamel work, jewellery, tile-work and interior decoration. Ram Singh, nicknamed The Navigator, seems to have been born at Okhamandal about the beginning of the eighteenth century. He was a Wagha by caste, and followed the sea from very early years. In the course of the voyage to Africa, while he was still a lad, he suffered shipwreck, and was rescued by a Dutch ship which was making its way back to the Netherlands. After many adventures, which included beating off an attack by pirates, the vessel, with Ram Singh on board, safely reached its home port in Europe. The young Kathiawadi had a natural talent for using his hands; he became an expert in the tile work, the glass-blowing, and the enamel work for which the Dutch craftsmen were famous. He also learned clock-making, designing of buildings, and stone-carving, after the European fashion, as well as the elements of foundry work and gun-casting. He stayed in Europe for some eighteen years before he decided to return to India. By this time he was a man of thirty. Somewhat naturally, his first thought was to go home and seek a patron among the Kathiawad Princes. But they were not interested in the arts which he practised, and he suffered a series of disappointments.



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THE MIRZA MAHARAOS

As he had some kinsfolk in Mandvi, he determined to go there as a last resort.

He found at Mandvi a reception which exceeded his hopes. The city was prosperous and a resort of traders; it contained people who could understand and appreciate Ram Singh's skill as a craftsman; as a designer, as an engineer. Before long, his reputation reached Prince Lakho, who about this time had displaced his father, Maharao Desal, from the exercise of ruling powers. Lakho at once took Ram Singh under his patronage, gave him a workshop in the Palace, and summoned the best craftsmen in gold and silver from all over Kutch to learn from him the art of enamelling. Magnificent specimens of this art still exist, and are highly prized as collector's pieces. For more than a century and a half after Ram Singh's death, the school of enamel work which he founded remained famous all over India. In the first half of the present century, the tradition decayed: the art was essentially a Court luxury, and with the lack of patronage resulting from changed economic circumstances, it inevitably cheapened itself to seek wider markets, so that the enamel work on sale to-day in Bhuj and Mandvi bears very little resemblance to the show-pieces created by Ram Singh and his successors.

Maharao Lakho believed so firmly in Ram Singh's capabilities that he sent him twice back to Europe to perfect his knowledge of glass-making and of iron founding; and on the last occasion, Ram Singh took with him a number of Kutchi apprentices for higher instruction in Europe. The party are said to have visited Venice and Austria, among other places; and when they returned, they brought with them a number of very useful skills. A glass factory was set up near Mandvi, where suitable sand was found. A tile factory was also established. Watches and clocks on the European model were made in Kutch. An iron foundry began to turn out excellent cannon. Ram Singh, secure in the favour of Maharao Lakho, presided over all these activities with extraordinary success. It says much both for his exceptional ability and for his devotion to his work



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that no one was jealous of him; he survived all the political troubles which swept over Kutch during his later years, and died at a great age, active to the last, on the pleasant estate near Mundra which he had been given.

Ram Singh has left an indelible impression upon Kutchi art and architecture. He never forgot his early apprenticeship in the Netherlands and in all the many buildings which he designed—from the palace at Mandvi to the tombs of Maharao Desal and Maharao Lakho outside Bhuj—he introduced his characteristic sign-manual, the figures of the jolly Dutch 'prentice-lads, roistering with wine-bottle and cup, from whom he had learned his craft in Holland. But even without these, there would be no mistaking the work which he and his pupils executed. Gods, dancing-girls, elephants, alligators, flowers, domestic animals, are depicted with admirable freshness and vigour. The naturalism of contemporary Europe and the meticulous detail to which Dutch artists and sculptors attached so much importance, are blended harmoniously with the master-touch which Kutch had never lost since the great artistic era of Lakho Fulani and Punvro eight hundred years earlier. Though small in comparison with many of the better known architectural masterpieces in other parts of India, and sadly ruined by the earthquake shocks which have overtaken them from time to time, these buildings of Ram Singh have a quality all their own which is a refreshing illustration of what the genius of India and the craftsmanship of Europe can achieve.

The great masterpiece of Ram Singh is the Hall of Mirrors, in the Old Palace. The walls are of white marble, covered with mirrors separated by gilded ornaments and the hall is lit by elaborate pendant candelabra, with shades of Venetian glass, many of which were brought to Bhuj by Ram Singh himself. The most remarkable feature, however, is the fact that with the exception of a narrow walk near the walls, the entire floor of the hall is a pleasure-pool, lined with the china tiles which Ram Singh manufactured. From the middle of the pool rises



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a square platform, to which access is gained by a narrow raised walk. The Hall of Mirrors is on the second floor of the Old Palace; but Ram Singh devised ingenious pumps and siphons to raise up water to fill the pleasure-pool, and to operate fountains which cast spray in an intricate variety of patterns, charming the eye and cooling the air. Even in the heat of the Kutch summer day, before the rains have broken, the Aina Mahal is a pleasant refuge. With entrance darkened against the glare, dust and burning world outside, lit by the light of many candles, and cooled by the surrounding water and by the spraying fountains, the central platform forms a refuge which affords a remarkable anticipation of the solaces of modern air-conditioning. It was here that Maharao Lakho composed the poems which are still read; watched the dancing-girls whose classical art his patronage did so much to revive and listened to the Bards and Charans who had perfected their study of *Vrij Bhasa* in the college which he founded. And all around the Hall of Mirrors are the evidences of Ram Singh's ingenuity and of the friendship which bound him to his patron. The small state apartment, carpeted with exquisite Kutchi silk embroidery, its walls panelled high with the same priceless fabrics, still contains Maharao Lakho's bed, on which lie his sword and buckler. It is filled with a curious miscellaneous collection of objects—chiming clocks—Dutch, English or French: celestial globes: some antique pictures: mechanical toys: glass and china—all connected in some way with Ram Singh and with the arts and crafts which he introduced so successfully into the land of his adoption. On the walls of the corridor which surrounds the inner chamber, are a variety of paintings, some European and many Indian. Eighteenth century cartoons by Hogarth, and portraits of such notabilities as the Empress Catherine the Great are arranged in close proximity to paintings of much historical interest depicting the formal durbars of Maharao Lakho and of his successors. A curious characteristic is the occasional introduction of real gems into the ear-ring or necklace on the painted surface of a portrait.



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Some European visitors have remarked upon the incongruity of the collection: but its interest lies in the blend of European and Indian artistry which is typical of the cultural impulse which Ram Singh gave to Kutch—a true forerunner of much that was to happen on the wider stage of India a good deal later.

This notable effort to introduce an industrial revolution into Kutch, although it left legacies of permanent artistic value both to Kutch and to India, was in many ways premature. Only in Kutch, partly isolated from the fearful competition for power to which the break-up of the Moghal Empire was exposing India, could it have had even a chance of taking hold, let alone surviving. Before long, Kutch itself was to be drawn, in a manner fatal to its own peaceful progress, into the struggles which raged outside. In the circumstances, the wonder is that so much of what Ram Singh and Maharao Lakho achieved between them managed to last, and to inspire traditions of skilled craftsmanship which can be traced to this day, although in shape sometimes sadly deteriorated, in Kutchi embroidery, in Kutchi carving and in Kutchi metal work.

The cost was enormous. The Aina Mahal alone accounted for eight million koris: that was only one of the many enterprises which the Maharao and Ram Singh undertook together. There were many other buildings; there were the factories, there were the voyages abroad, there were the wages of the skilled craftsmen, there were the costly imports. It is small wonder that the burden was too great for the comparatively small resources which were all that the Maharao could command in the semi-feudal society of Kutch, that the reserves left by Maharao Desal soon disappeared, that Maharao Lakho was perpetually at his wit's end for money. His need for it accounts for many of the less creditable episodes in his remarkable reign.

It was obvious to the Maharao that the services of a trained financier were indispensable. Devkaran Seth was dead by an assassin's hand; but his son, Punja Seth, had inherited his great ability. In spite of Maharao Lakho's share in the father's murder, the son was persuaded to accept office as Diwan, thus



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entering upon a long and tempestuous political career which was destined to inflict grave injury upon the State, Punja Seth first held office, however, only for five years. It is said that he was dismissed because of his failure to meet the Maharao's insatiable demand for money; but it seems more probable that his master suspected him of feathering his own nest too well: for the new Diwan, a Bania named Rupsi Shah, was permitted to arrest Punja Seth and his immediate subordinates, and to torture them until they made over large sums of money. Punja Seth was kept in prison for four years; but Rupsi Shah failed in his turn to satisfy the Maharao's financial requirements and the Seth was restored to office. His second term as Diwan was no better fated than his first; before long he was dismissed and replaced by Gordhan Mehta. From this period, Punja Seth became, for as long as he lived, the stormy petrel of Kutchi politics.

He deeply resented the second dismissal, the more so as Gordhan Mehta, having succeeded in satisfying the Maharao and retaining power, was in an apparently secure position, while he himself was condemned to obscure retirement. Before long, however, Punja Seth's restless ambition perceived a fresh avenue of advancement. He attached himself to the young Prince God, who was Maharao Lakho's only legitimate son and the heir-apparent. The Maharao had learned the lesson of his own youth, and had made over to God the important town of Mundra, which supplied him with ample revenues for the upkeep of his dignity. But God's mother, the Maharani, became seriously estranged from her husband, no doubt disliking his patronage of dancing girls, which was by no means confined to the encouragement of their classical art. Maharao Lakho had many mistresses and a host of illegitimate children; the Maharani, fearing that God would be set aside in favour of some son of a concubine, encouraged him to claim a share in his father's authority which would establish his position as heir beyond doubt. Punja Seth became the adviser and confidant of God and the Maharani; and under his expert guidance, the Prince's faction became formidable. Maharao Lakho, offended



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by the Prince's pretensions, definitely and finally refused him any share in the management of the State, which was being competently conducted by Gordhan Mehta. Punja Seth now planned a *coup* which was designed both to establish his own ascendancy over the Prince and his mother, and to ruin Gordhan Mehta. He persuaded God and the Maharani to defy the Maharao, to leave Bhuj, and to retire to Mundra. But before this move was made, Punja Seth sought and was granted a private interview with the Diwan. He carefully drew public attention to his visit in order to make sure that reports of it would be carried to the Maharao; then, with every appearance of secrecy, and behind carefully shuttered windows and bolted doors, he contrived to detain Gordhan Mehta for two hours in conversation which had no bearing at all on the differences between Maharao Lakho and his wife and son. Having sown the seed of misunderstanding, Punja Seth withdrew and accompanied the Maharani and the Prince in their clandestine flight to Mundra. The Maharao was greatly enraged and, learning of Punja Seth's 'secret' interview with Gordhan Mehta a few hours before the departure of the party, suspected his Diwan of complicity in the affair and ordered his execution. It was then the turn of Rupshi Shah to become Diwan again for a short time; but he failed, as before, to satisfy the Maharao, and was soon displaced.

The new Diwan was Tulsidas, a courtier who was often trusted with confidential business, but who had little experience of administration. At the time when Maharao Lakho cherished the idea of intervening in the politics of the mainland by attacking Tatta, with the support of the Peishwa and the Gaekwar, Tulsidas had been despatched to the court of Kabul to enlist the help of Ahmad Shah Durrani. Ahmad Shah, who had his own reasons for favouring the enterprise, received Tulsidas very graciously and promised every help and support. At this time, Lower Sind was passing through very troublous times. The Kalhora family had begun to build up their power there in the seventeenth century, and had made themselves



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formidable enough to secure recognition from the Emperor Aurangzeb as Moghal feudatories. When Nadir Shah swooped down upon Delhi in 1739, and shattered the last traces of Moghal power, Sind and all the former Moghal provinces west of the Indus were incorporated in the Persian Empire. The Kalhora Princes resisted Persian authority; and after Nadir Shah's death, continued to resist Ahmad Shah Durrani, to whose suzerainty Sind had passed. In 1754, Ahmad Shah Durrani invaded Sind and collected tribute by force; but Muhammad Murad Yar Khan Kalhora, who had made his submission to the Durrani monarch, was overthrown in 1757 by his brother, Ghulam Shah Kalhora. He proved a reluctant vassal; and Ahmad Shah Durrani, wishing to make difficulties for him, eagerly fell in with the suggestion that Maharao Lakho should attack Tatta. As had been pointed out before, it seems doubtful whether Maharao Lakho's interests were ever seriously engaged in the venture; but no doubt he was gratified by the promises of support which he had received from such powerful princes as the Peishwa, the Gaekwar, and the Durrani King. It was therefore natural for the Maharao to take Tulsidas into high favour when he returned successfully from his embassy to the Kabul court, and to appoint him Diwan. But neither the Maharao nor Tulsidas realized how much harm would come to Kutch because of the enmity of Ghulam Shah Kalhora, who took very ill this projected intervention of Kutch into Sindhi politics, even though it eventually came to nothing.

Prince God and his mother, having made good their retreat to Mundra, set up what was in effect an independent dominion in defiance of the Maharao's authority. Punja Seth, as their principal adviser, found himself once again in a position of influence. But it was his misfortune that Prince God was by nature capricious and ungovernable—characteristics which were to make him, when he became Maharao, the most unpopular and the least esteemed of all the rulers of Kutch in the judgment of posterity. He refused to give Punja Seth his entire confidence, and, as a counterpoise to the minister's ability and



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experience, took into high favour one Mirza Amir Beg, a man of good family but of unprincipled character. Before long Prince God was pressed for money: the revenues of Mundra were insufficient to support a court and the allowance which Maharao Lakho had made to his son was naturally cut off. There were many wealthy merchants in Mundra; the trading element was important. Had the situation been prudently handled by the experienced Punja Seth, money would no doubt have been forthcoming. But Prince God was impatient: he wanted funds at once. An opportunity seemed to present itself when Shah Madanji, a merchant whose wealth had made him famous not only in Mundra, but throughout the whole of Kutch, suddenly died. Many of the greatest merchants from other parts of the kingdom came to Mundra to convey their condolences, and to take part in the mourning ceremonies. Mirza Amir Beg, with deplorable irresponsibility, persuaded Prince God to close the gates of the city upon the visitors, and to detain them until they had paid heavy ransom. This outrageous action, although it brought in large sums of money, also brought misfortune upon the Prince. Maharao Lakho attached great importance to the well-being of the merchant community. When their complaints came before him, he determined to take drastic action against his son. He despatched a force against Mundra to bring Prince God to his senses. But the Prince, making his way out of the city, fled to Morvi, where he was welcomed warmly and given assistance. Accompanied by some Morvi soldiers, he returned to Mundra, and compelled the Maharao's forces to raise the siege, which had been managed either very incompetently, or without due caution, by Tulsidas. Both the Maharao and the Prince, however, were too sensible to push to extremes a feud which could only benefit their common enemies and before long, terms were arranged between them. Prince God returned to his obedience and was allowed to retain Mundra. The victim of the bargain was Punja Seth, who was dismissed from the Prince's household and sent into retirement to Abdasa. Here



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life became so difficult for him, lacking protection as he did, that he sought refuge at length in Junagadh, a disappointed man. Maharao Lakho had never forgiven him for the intrigue which resulted in the death of Gordhan Mehta: Prince God was unwilling to forgo the advantage to be gained by sacrificing him.

Maharao Lakho was by this time (1760-61) a very sick man, whose disorders were ascribed by contemporaries to his profligate habits. He is said never to have risen until four o'clock in the afternoon, and to have entrusted the affairs of the kingdom to unworthy, and even to disreputable, ministers. What justice there may be in these strictures is not easy to determine. His way of life, and, in particular, his patronage of poets, dancing girls, and other 'outsiders' to the Court circle no doubt offended the strait-laced: his poetic gifts, the songs which he wrote, and his delight in the company of Ram Singh and other widely-travelled and intelligent people, were too unusual in a reigning Maharao to appeal to the conservative nobility. At the same time, there is no evidence that public affairs were in confusion. He had found an able Diwan in Jivan Seth, who had been trained in the school of Devkaran and of Punja. In spite of the Maharao's lavish expenditure, taxation was low, trade flourished and the land revenue increased. The policy of new settlement proved brilliantly successful; for example, Lakhpat yielded an annual sum of 800,000 koris from rice-cultivation alone. Moreover, in spite of the mismanagement of the siege of Mundra, the Maharao's forces were sufficiently strong to commend him to the Peishwa, the Gaekwar, and Ahmad Shah Durrani as an ally worth conciliating, while inside Kutch, he was supreme. When the chief of Dhamarka, relying on the Maharao's poor health and apparent absorption in artistic activities, bullied and oppressed the tenants of one of the royal estates, he was read a sharp lesson. Maharao Lakho despatched a force against him which quickly captured Dhamarka and razed its fortifications to the ground. The only accusation of feebleness that can be seriously held against Maharao Lakho is the decline of Kutch influence in



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Sind and Parkar which followed on the abandonment of Kutch suzerainty over Virawal and other ports. Too little is known about the circumstances of this withdrawal to justify its ascription to the Maharao's mismanagement; in view of the power which Ghulam Shah Kalhora was now exercising in Sind, the ports may have been indefensible without the kind of major operation which Maharao Lakho is known to have been contemplating, but which never materialized. It may be, indeed, that the restoration of the *thana* of Virawal to the Soda chief who was its former owner—a step taken on the advice of Punja Seth—was in reality both prudent and politic.

On his death-bed, the Maharao went far to justify the fears which Prince God and his mother had long harboured. He tried hard to persuade his military officers—significantly enough, he does not seem to have worried about his civilian functionaries—to accept one of his illegitimate children, probably Mansingh, as his successor. They refused and sent messengers to Prince God in Mundra to come immediately to Bhuj. Maharao Lakho expired before his heir arrived; the Prince found all his father's officials, civil and military, as well as the *bhayyad* and the other important feudatories, gathered to acclaim him, as he ascended the *gadi* with the title of Maharao God II. The late Maharao's ashes found their resting-place in the magnificent *chhatra* designed for him by his friend and protégé Ram Singh—a building which still stands as one of the most notable achievements of Kutch's architecture. No Maharani followed him to his pyre; but fifteen of the dancing girls, whose patron and protector he had been, sacrificed themselves as *satis*, and thus established his claim to the noble dome which surmounts his cenotaph.

Maharao God II was twenty-six years of age in 1761, when he succeeded his father; and to begin with, he made few changes in the machinery of administration. Impressed with the ability of Jivan Seth, he continued him in office, regardless of the feelings of Punja Seth. That ambitious man was convinced that the death of Maharao Lakho would bring about a decisive



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improvement in his fortunes. Had he not been the confidential adviser of the new ruler for many years? Was not Jivan Seth, Maharao Lakho's Diwan, a pupil and former subordinate of his own, as well as of his father Devkaran? Surely Jivan would see to it that his old master's claims were not overlooked? With a light heart, Punja set out from Junagadh on his long road to Bhuj. But he had reckoned without two factors, Maharao God's fickleness and Jivan's ambition. Uneasily conscious that he could not match Punja in ability or experience, Jivan persuaded the Maharao to refuse to see Punja, and to forbid the former Diwan to enter Bhuj, or even to drink water before turning his back upon the walls of the capital. Bitterly mortified, Punja retired to Wagad, intending there to settle his future course of action. If the worst happened, he could find refuge in Parkar; for he knew that Ghulam Shah Kalhora would give a warm welcome to any enemy of the Kutch Government, which had shown itself a potential source of danger to the Sind Kingdom. But Punja was not yet ready to abandon his expectations of the Maharao's favour: hoping against hope, he halted at Kanthkot. He found, however, that the chief, a *bhayyad*, was not willing to give offence to the Maharao by harbouring an exile: he was obliged to seek refuge at Jatavada. Meanwhile, Jivan, no doubt realizing, too late, the folly of leaving at large an offended statesman of Punja's ambition and ability, despatched a body of horse to arrest the fugitive. The squire of Jatavada, true to the traditions of Rajput hospitality, but unable to defy the royal cavalry, smuggled Punja safely out of Kutch and across the Rann to Virawal in Parkar.

Here Punja found himself safe from his enemies, for the chieftain, who owed his restoration to Punja's own decision, welcomed him warmly. Punja's course was now clear; he felt that he had nothing to hope for from Maharao God, so all that remained to him was revenge. For this Ghulam Shah Kalhora was the obvious instrument and it so happened that the path lay open because Gidomal, Ghulam Shah's Diwan, was a caste-fellow of Punja himself. Correspondence was quickly



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opened between them. Ghulam Shah was not the man to miss the opportunity of securing the services of someone so well acquainted with Kutchi affairs as Punja Seth. He sent Punja a cordial invitation to visit him in Hyderabad, along with a present of a thousand gold mohurs to meet his expenses, a palanquin to ease his journey, and an escort of a hundred men to enable him to travel in a manner befitting his rank.

When Punja Seth reached Hyderabad, Ghulam Shah Kalhora received him with every mark of honour and took him into close confidence. Doubtless he questioned him in detail about the situation in Kutch, and, in particular, about the prospects that Maharao God II would revive the dangerous combination against Sind which Maharao Lakho had headed. It is not hard to understand the way in which the mind of the Sindhi King was working. A hostile Kutch was always a potential peril: on the other hand, there was no hope of embodying Kutch permanently in the Kingdom of Sind. For one thing, Kutch was too strong to be held down: even if the Maharao's forces could be defeated, the *bhayyad* and the great Rajput feudatories, secure in their strongholds, could never be effectively reduced to permanent submission. Further, the Rann, although it could be crossed by a properly equipped expedition, was too formidable an obstacle to ordinary communications to permit Kutch to be administered from Sind. The best course, therefore, seemed to be to win the friendship, or at least the neutrality, of Kutch by an alliance between the ruling Houses. What chance was there of securing a Kutch princess in marriage? Punja Seth's advice was quite clear; the idea was an excellent one but the only hope of realizing it was to bring irresistible armed force against Bhuj to cow Maharao God into acquiescence. The King accepted this conclusion and began his preparations accordingly.

Kutchi tradition rightly saddles Punja Seth with the main responsibility for the sufferings which Ghulam Shah's invasion brought upon Kutch. Yet it ought, in fairness, to be remembered that the Kalhora King was far too shrewd and experienced



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to undertake such an operation merely because Punja Seth incited him to do so. What seems to have happened is that a determination to strike a blow at Kutch already existed in Tatta; the object of this stroke was to safeguard Sind from any future attempts at interference from the Kutch side. But for Punja Seth's presence, and for his advice that a marriage alliance could be extorted by force, the invasion would probably not have taken place when it did and to this extent the blame which Kutchis attach to Punja Seth's name is justified: yet Punja Seth's thirst for revenge would not have been gratified unless his advice had happened to fit in with King Ghulam Shah's own policy and plans.

Maharao God and his Diwan were not idle while Ghulam Shah Kalora was collecting his forces. The *bhayyad* and the great feudatories, with their levies, were called up. They assembled under the command of Jivan Seth in a strong position near Jhara—where Maharao Khengar I had met defeat long ago at the hands of a former King of Sind—which was a convenient locality for striking against any route which Ghulam Shah Kalhora was likely to use in crossing the Rann. The Maharao himself remained at Bhuj with his personal armed retainers, strengthened against the coming danger by troops hired for the occasion from the Jam of Nawanager and the Nawab of Radhanpur. Such hiring was a costly business in those days—the Radhanpur troops alone demanded 900,000 koris for four months' service—and the transaction shows that the Maharao's financial resources must have been considerable. Having made the best preparations that they could devise, the Kutchi authorities awaited the blow that was impending.

The King of Sind, accompanied by Punja Seth, set off to invade Kutch with a force which was reckoned at 70,000 men. Not all of these were soldiers from Sind; the prospect of looting Kutch, which had remained for so long free from the disorders which were ruining other parts of India, attracted warlike adventurers from many places. Of the campaign which followed, almost every detail has been preserved in Bardic



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memory; for the second battle of Jhara, and its sequel, are to Kutchis what Flodden Field is to the Scots or Mohacz to the Hungarians.

The great expedition made the perilous passage of the Rann successfully but their water only just held out and their commissariat broke down. They were in acute distress when they reached Kutch territory. They made a forced march to Nara, where they hoped to find supplies. But the place was deserted: all food had been carried away and the wells had been blocked with stones. The plight of the invaders was desperate; the army was thirsting almost to death: a single glass of water sold for a rupee. Had Jivan Seth attacked them forthwith, nothing could have saved them from destruction. But the Diwan was a diplomat, not a tactician; he preferred to remain in his strong position on Jhara hill while, as he hoped, the invaders came to their senses and were chastened by their misfortunes into the right mood for peaceful negotiations. Ghulam Shah Kalhora, fully conscious of the danger, knew that success or failure depended on the possibility of gaining a respite: he feigned willingness to negotiate. Jivan Seth was deceived. In vain did the gallant Thakor Lakha of Vinjan, who led the *bhayyad*, urge the Diwan to attack, or at least to bring up his troops to overawe the demoralized Sindhis. Jivan Seth would not listen. Ghulam Shah Kalhora was thus enabled to rally his forces, to restore their morale, and to recapture the initiative. Even so, the fate of the expedition hung in the balance. The local population was stubbornly hostile, and Ghulam Shah Kalora could find neither guides nor information.

He determined to storm the hill of Jhara and to dispose of Jivan Seth's command by a single stroke: but he could not determine the best way of reaching the Kutchi camp. He heard by chance that two brothers, Bhim and Vissa, illegitimate sons of a local jagirdar, had been debarred by the stigma of their birth from joining the Maharao's forces. Hoping to profit by this affront to their pride, the Sindhi King sent for them, received them with all honour, and asked them to guide his



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forces up the hill. They refused: they would not help the enemies of their country. As they left the King's presence, one said to the other, 'What fools we are—we should have killed him!' Ghulam Shah, on his part, silently reproached himself for rashness in allowing two fully armed knights to approach so closely. The brothers, determined to retrieve their mistake, attempted to re-enter the King's tent, but he would not allow them near unless they left their weapons. This they refused to do, telling him that even if they were prevented from fighting along with the other nobles of Kutch, they would resist the Sindhi forces to the death at the foot of Jhara hill. In due course they kept their promise, fighting, even after they had been mortally wounded, until they were hacked to pieces. Along with them fell their mother, who had joined them in their desperate resistance.

The King of Sind, having completed his preparations for the attack, advanced to the foot of Jhara hill. He caused a number of cows to be collected and had them driven ahead of his troops in the expectation that the instinct of the animals would lead them to choose practicable tracks which the soldiers could follow. It was in the small hours of the morning, on the tenth day of the bright of the moon of Magsar, Samvat 1819 (AD 1762) that the second battle of Jhara began. There was a heavy mist: friend could hardly be distinguished from foe. The cows which the Sindhis drove in front of them took the brunt of the first volleys of the defenders and before the Kutchis could reload, the Sindhis were among them. A specially heavy cannon commanded the main path into the camp: the Kutchi troops had great faith in its deadliness. But when it was fired, a great misfortune overtook the defenders. According to one version, the cannon burst, spreading confusion among the warriors who had clustered round it in great numbers to watch the execution which it would do among the attackers. Another, and perhaps more probable, version is that the foggy dew of the early morning had slackened the rawhide ropes which retained the cannon in position, so that at the first fire it leaped



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from its emplacement, to the consternation of all who had pinned their faith to its power, rolled down the hill, and played no further part in the battle. Exactly what happened cannot be determined, except that the gun was put out of action in some fashion which seriously lowered the morale of the Kutchi troops and correspondingly elated their enemies, while at the same time a pivotal point of the defences crumbled.

The Kutchis fought heroically; there were even women battling side by side with the men in a passion of patriotism. But there had been no large-scale warfare in Kutch for more than a century and the *bhayyad* nobility had had little practice in combining their individual bands of clansmen into an efficient army. The Sindhis, on the other hand, after centuries of perpetual warfare and constant invasion, were well skilled in all tactical combinations and accustomed to fight according to a previously-concerted plan. In the confusion caused by the disaster to the cannon all order forsook the Kutchi ranks. Small groups fought heroically but they lost touch with one another in the fog and were overwhelmed, one by one, by the superior discipline of the Sindhis. The slaughter was terrible: Diwan Jivan Seth, the heroic Lakha of Vinjan, the Thakor of Nara, with his three sons, and scores of other leaders, fell on that fatal morning. But they had sold their lives dearly: the losses on the Sind side were heavy. Kutchi historians claim that 100,000 persons perished on the hill of Jhara in the most frightful disaster of which the records of their country take notice.

From the standpoint of Kutch, the position seemed desperate. The great feudal forces under the command of Jivan Seth had been annihilated: the slaughter among the *bhayyad* and feudal chiefs was so great that the possibility of organizing further resistance was remote. Ghulam Shah Kalhora, although his army had been badly mauled, remained master of the field and his forces, still an effective fighting unit, found nothing to oppose them. He determined to secure his line of retreat by subduing Abdasa before he attacked Bhuj, taking hostages from the jagirdars, and plundering the country. He struck south-west



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towards Tera, on the way scattering the Kapdia monks at Mata-no-Modh in a headlong fight, in the course of which all their ancient records and deeds of gift were lost. He received the submission of the fortress, levied a heavy fine upon the neighbourhood, and prepared to resume his leisurely advance upon the capital.

Maharao God was still in Bhuj with his mercenary forces, but their loyalty seemed doubtful now that his own army and so many of his barons had been destroyed. A further resort to arms seemed hopeless; the best prospect lay in the hope that the Sindhis could be persuaded to accept a reasonable compromise. They were entirely strange to the country: no Kutchi would help them. If Punja Seth could be detached from their cause, they might fall a prey to any skilful deception. Accordingly the Maharao persuaded his mother, Punja Seth's former patroness, to send to the Seth one of her own white hairs, enclosed in a little silver box, with a message imploring him not to disgrace her and her family in her old age, and to do his best to bring about a reconciliation. Along with this pathetic entreaty was sent a message from the Maharao himself, confessing that he had treated Punja Seth badly; blaming the deceased Jivan for the misrepresentation which had alienated him from the Seth; asking him to resume the office of Diwan with plenary powers and promising to ratify any agreement which Ghulam Shah Kalhora could be persuaded to accept.

These two messages not only gratified the wounded pride of Punja Seth, but completed his growing hostility to the Sindhi cause, whose unexpected success, accompanied by the fearful tragedy of Jhara, had already caused him great perturbation. Punja had no wish at all to ruin Kutch but only to take vengeance upon those whom he held responsible for his personal misfortunes. Of these, Jivan Seth was dead and the Maharao had asked for a reconciliation. Once again, the way was open for the exercise of his rightful power as 'hereditary' Diwan in succession to his father. But first the Sindhi forces must be got rid of.



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Punja Seth's cleverness soon suggested a stratagem. He had many friends in Kutch, in spite of his recent misfortunes—one of them, indeed, the Chief of Motara, was so strong an ally of Punja that he had refused to bring his contingent to oppose the Sindhi forces purely because his friend the Seth was in Ghulam Shah Kalhora's camp. With their help, the wily Diwan arranged to rig out several thousand villagers in red and blue uniforms and to introduce them into the fort of Sindhan, which Ghulam Shah Kalhora now proposed to attack. When the King advanced to the siege, he was dismayed to find that the normal garrison of 600 men was swollen into a force which presented the appearance of being almost as numerous as his own. He gave up all attempt to fight against such heavy odds, and withdrew, disconcerted by the failure of his plan of campaign. He sought advice from Punja Seth: he was told that the formidable force in Sindhan was in reality only the weakest of five or six strong garrisons which must be subdued before he could safely advance on the capital and that when he reached Bhuj, he would encounter the formidable mercenary garrison of Nawanagar and Radhanpur troops.

Ghulam Shah Kalhora, as has already been pointed out, had never seriously considered the possibility of annexing Kutch. All he had proposed was to teach the Kutchis a lesson on the danger of interfering with him and to secure himself against further mischief by a marriage alliance. He was therefore quite ready to consider some arrangement which would permit him to escape from what he had always believed to be a hornet's nest with profit and honour to himself. He readily accepted Punja Seth's suggestion that he should withdraw his forces from Kutch in return for a payment for the expenses of the expedition and for the losses which he had suffered, together with a marriage contract for the hand of a Kutchi princess. Since his own kingdom could not safely be left for very long—his brother, Ghulam Nabi Khan, was a dangerous and ambitious rival—Ghulam Shah was eager to be gone. The bargain was concluded; the Sindhi army withdrew from Kutch, and re-



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crossed the Rann, taking with it a son of Punja Seth as hostage.

Punja Seth then went to Bhuj to secure the fulfilment of the agreement and was received with high respect by Maharao God. He found a situation in the capital which was almost as dangerous as that which he had successfully resolved at Sindhan. The Radhanpur mercenaries, discontented with the shortage of food and knowing that there were no Kutchi troops left to restrain them, had seized all the fortified gates of Bhuj, had taken control over the city and had defied the Maharao to dislodge them. Punja, whose physical courage was as remarkable as his mental astuteness, contrived to entice the commander of the Radhanpur troops to a private interview on the pretext of finding out, and satisfying, his demands. The first request was for corn, which was extremely scarce. Punja ordered waggons to be loaded with sacks of stones and into each sack, near the mouth, he caused a few measures of corn to be poured. The waggons, groaning under what looked like ample supplies of corn, were paraded near the window of the room where the interview was taking place and the Radhanpur commander, pleased that his demand had been granted so readily, relaxed his vigilance. Suddenly Punja Seth seized him by the throat, swearing that unless he ordered the men under his command to leave the city, he should be the first to die, while, if they all went peaceably outside the walls, the corn waggons would follow them. The commander agreed and gave the necessary orders. But as soon as the Radhanpuris were safely beyond the gates, the guns of the city were trained upon them, and they found, too late, that their treachery had been repaid in kind.

The moment that Bhuj was safe, Punja Seth took up the reins of administration with his usual vigour. During the two years of life which remained to him, he suppressed an outbreak of disaffection in Wagad, levying heavy fines upon the recalcitrant jagirdars of Kanthkot and the surrounding districts, and enforcing their submission to the royal authority. With perhaps more questionable wisdom, he undertook operations in Abdasa



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against the Thakur of Nalia, who had been rash enough to offend the Seth's old friend the Chief of Motara. Good management and strict supervision soon restored financial stability: Maharao God found himself able to increase the strength of his forts and to build up again a standing army of respectable dimensions. These measures gave him confidence in his capacity to defy Sind, if ever Ghulam Shah Kalhora should attempt another invasion and thus tended to diminish his sense of obligation to Punja Seth. Further, the Maharao had always greatly disliked the idea of a marriage alliance with the Kalhora dynasty, and had persisted, on one pretext or another, in evading this term of the arrangements concluded between his Diwan and the King of Sind. Punja Seth, relying upon his own indispensability, continually pressed his master to fulfil the agreement over the marriage. Unluckily for the Diwan, the Maharao had never really forgiven him for the humiliating apology from the Royal Family which had been the price of the Seth's return to the Kutchi allegiance and thus took his insistence upon the fulfilment of the marriage bargain in ill part. Maharao God, feeling certain that he could now afford to defy Sind, suddenly arrested Punja Seth in 1765, confined him in irons for ten days, and then presented him personally with a cup of poison, commanding him to drink it instantly.

This tragic termination of Punja Seth's distinguished, if tempestuous, career, convinced Ghulam Shah Kalhora that Kutch had no real intention of honouring the original agreement. He collected a force almost as formidable as the one which had brought him victory at Jhara, crossed the Rann with relative ease now that the treacherous routes were known to him and again advanced to Nara. As before, the countryside was deserted; but the King of Sind, forewarned by previous experience, was not this time caught short of supplies. He stormed the small fort at Mera, near Gunthli; the garrison of eighty Rajput warriors were killed to a man. Then, without wasting more time, Ghulam Shah marched straight for Bhuj and encamped at Rudra Mata, a few miles outside the city walls.



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He then sent his Diwan, Gidomal, to demand the fulfilment of the terms of the agreement. Maharao God remained completely confident: he had a formidable force at his disposal, his forts were strong and he believed that the Sindhis were no match for Kutchis in subtlety. He received the deputation coldly, refused to make any excuses, and instructed them to pass the night as his guests. In the middle of the night, when all was still, the entire artillery of the Maharao—every piece which could be made use of, whether in the city or in Bhujia fort, was suddenly discharged at a given signal. Nothing more happened. But Gidomal and his colleagues had been thoroughly startled: the sheer weight of cannon which the Maharao could muster disconcerted them. They returned to their master, warning him that Bhuj and its fortifications were too strong for him to attack. Ghulam Shah hung round Bhuj for some days and there was some skirmishing. The Maharao sat tight. Before long, Ghulam Shah was glad to accept a suggestion that he could receive the hand in marriage of a cousin, instead of a sister, of the Maharao. He could effect nothing against the newly-strengthened castles of the Maharao and the Maharao refused to meet him in the open field.

Overreached once again, Ghulam Shah retreated towards his own country. Before he quitted Kutch, however, he set up an outpost of 5,000 men at Lakhpatt, to keep watch over the doings of Maharao God—whom he had the best of reasons for distrusting. But he also did his best to injure Kutch by raising an earthwork which diverted one of the branches of the Indus from the Lakhpatt district, where it had been used for irrigating the rice crop. It is not easy to estimate exactly what damage he did, because his original undertaking has been entirely obliterated by seismic disturbances early in the nineteenth century. These had very serious effects indeed upon the entire water resources of the Abdasa district; a low mound, known as Allahband, or God's Dyke, was thrown up; and the course of the Indus and of all its waters was diverted right away from Kutch. Popular repute still saddles Ghulam Shah with the blame



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for the whole catastrophe, although in fact the worst part of it occurred long after his death through the operation of natural causes.

During the remaining years of Ghulam Shah's life—he died in 1772—the Sindhis seem to have been content to maintain the outpost of Lakhpat, which made itself a nuisance to the country all around, and drove many people to find refuge elsewhere. Ghulam Shah's son, Safaraz Khan, tried to emulate the exploits of his father by invading Kutch in 1775. He did not use Ghulam Shah's favourite Nara route, but preferred to strike further east by way of Sumrasir, hoping to surprise the capital. Failing in this, and being deterred by the strength of Bhuj, he turned further east into Wagad, married a daughter of the Thakor of Kanthkot and afterwards returned home with a good deal of loot. Maharao God did nothing to protect his subjects, preferring to keep his army intact behind strong walls. Very soon after his return to Sind, Safaraz Khan ran into trouble with the Baluchis who had supported his father: he lost his throne and was superseded by his uncle Ghulam Nabi Khan. In the confusion which followed, the Sindhi garrison was withdrawn from Lakhpat, and Dev Seth, Punja Seth's son, who had been held as a hostage since 1762, was released.

Since the poisoning of Punja Seth in 1765, the administration had suffered badly, and there was a dearth of men of experience and ability to put matters right. A succession of incompetent Diwans aggravated the breakdown of the government, while the Maharao's fickleness of disposition and reluctance to trust his officers were obstacles to any improvement. The outpost of Balambha in Kathiawad was tamely lost and at home things went from bad to worse. Looking round for a man of parts, the Maharao offered the diwanship to Dev Seth, who had recently returned to Kutch from Sind. But Dev Seth prudently excused himself and begged that he might be allowed to devote his energies to the rehabilitation of the desolate Lakhpat area. This he did with such success that he largely restored its prosperity: people returned there in large numbers and his fame spread



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widely. The Maharao would not take a denial: he insisted that Dev Seth should come and serve as Diwan. Reluctantly, Dev Seth agreed; but there were factions in Bhuj who had no mind to endure another Diwan of the calibre of Devkaran and Punja. They contrived to have Dev Seth poisoned on his way to the capital. With his murder the last hope of restoring the credit of Maharao God II's administration vanished.

The Maharao's main interest was now centred upon his armed forces, in whose efficiency he took great pride. He had learned by the bitter experience of Jhara how ineffective were the ordinary feudal levies led by the *bhayyad* and he maintained for his own use a large body of paid, whole-time soldiery. For his personal bodyguard he recruited Sidis, who, being foreigners, were less likely to side with any local factions against the *gaddi*. It is said that he was afraid of assassins. This may have been the case; but there were also obvious advantages in a bodyguard which owed loyalty only to himself. The *bhayyad* became jealous of Sidi influence, especially when the bodyguard grew more numerous. With the help of the ladies and some Palace officers the Maharao was kept in confinement until all the Sidis were turned out of Kutch by the feudal nobles. The Maharao was obliged to agree but to punish the nobility he forsook Bhuj for a considerable time, and went to live in Mandvi, where the people were loyal and the influence of the *bhayyad* was small.

Serious trouble broke out in Sind in 1777-1778. Mir Bijar, a chief of the Talpur tribe—who now began for the first time to figure in the pages of history—rose in rebellion, because his father had been murdered by order of the Kalhora dynasty. He defeated and slew the King, Ghulam Nabi Khan. Ghulam Nabi's brother, Abdul Nabi Khan, succeeded to the throne, and made terms with Mir Bijar, whom he appointed as his minister. The Talpur chief, anxious to avenge his father's murder, sought out the assassins, two Baluchis named Mambrini Hasan and Lakha. They fled to Kutch and Maharao God, always ready to show his dislike of Sind, was no doubt gratified that the laws of



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Rajput hospitality forbade him to surrender fugitives who had sought his protection. Mir Bijar thereupon fitted out an expedition to invade Kutch; but, like almost all such enterprises, it proved ill-fated. The Sindhi forces followed the old Abdasa route, and did a certain amount of damage by ravaging the countryside. Maharao God, having reckoned up their strength, launched a detachment of his army against them, with an experienced professional soldier, Mirza Kurpa Beg, in command. The invaders were badly cut up at Bithan and the people of Tera, infuriated by their pillaging, joined the Maharao's forces in attacking them as they retreated. Mir Bijar only made his escape across the Rann with great difficulty and after suffering heavy losses.

Unfortunately the success of this operation went to Mirza Kurpa Beg's head, and he began to conduct himself with great insolence towards the Maharao, refusing to obey orders and boasting that he was master of the State. He further arrogated exclusive civil as well as military authority to himself, and began to interfere in the course of the administration for the benefit of himself and his friends. The Maharao could do little, as his army stood behind the new dictator. But Maharao God's ingenuity did not fail him; he pretended to be out of his senses and to take no interest in State affairs. Lulled into complete security, Mirza Kurpa Beg was foolish enough to quarrel with the two Baluchi refugees, who were not men to endure bullying meekly. But they were guests and their first step, before they avenged themselves, was to get into touch with their protector, the Maharao. That ruler seized the occasion to rid himself of an insolent upstart, and gave the Baluchis good reason for supposing that he would have no objection to their taking the law into their own hands if opportunity offered. Within a few days, the Mirza sent for them, and demanded a large sum of money from them as the price of their asylum in Kutch. When they represented that they were refugees, without resources, and could not pay, the Mirza ordered their wives and children to be sold into slavery to raise money. This was the



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final insult. Mad with fury, the Baluchis fell upon Mirza Kurpa Beg and slew him on the spot. Maharao God was highly delighted and conferred upon the assassins considerable holdings in the villages of Bawat and Bara, where they eventually settled permanently.

Maharao God did not live long to enjoy the restoration of his authority. When the time came for him to attend the Naga Panchmi ceremonies, his altered appearance shocked everyone. Dropsy had him in its grip and he died quickly. No one mourned him very much and Kutchi historians have little good to say of him. Yet he was a considerable figure in his day: the Gaekwar was glad to marry his sister and he survived a whole series of formidable invasions without losing his throne. Moreover, his ability is shown by the condition of the country during his reign: cultivation spread—during the latter part of the reign, indeed, Kutch was able to supply grain to Sind: the population remained stable and commerce flourished. He was a great patron of traders and of merchants; in his time Mandvi became famous all over India for the products of its shipyards. The Maharao was a keen amateur of shipbuilding, and spent much time personally supervising the details of construction. It was in his time that the ship was launched from Mandvi slips which voyaged to England and back with an all-Kutchi crew. Undoubtedly it was Maharao God's intelligent fostering of commercial enterprise which made Kutch so flourishing in his time. There were very few parts of India of which the same could be said during this disturbed era. But he was small, mean and unprepossessing in appearance, and miserly in his private life. Moreover he has left a name for cruelty which offsets the credit of his very real achievements. There is little doubt that he found the money to sustain his large army by murdering, and confiscating the fortune of, Diwan after Diwan—more than twenty of them in all—during his reign. He was fully aware that this policy would do him no harm either with the *bhayyad* or with the common people; for the Diwans, by the nature of their duties, were drawn mostly from the Lohana



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or Bania castes. The authority which they wielded, and the fortunes which they amassed, caused them to be despised by the nobles and hated by the masses. Thus their fall excited no protest; while at the same time, the opportunities which ministerial office presented for amassing a fortune sufficed to ensure an unfailing supply of candidates. Only when this office fell into the hands of soldiers as contrasted with merchants, did such a procedure fail.

During his reign, Kutch was able to supply grain to Sind; the population remained stable and commerce flourished. He was a great patron of scholars and of merchants; in his time Mandvi became famous all over India for the products of its shipyards. The Maharao was a keen amateur of shipbuilding and spent much time personally supervising the details of construction. It was in his time that the ship was launched from Mandvi which voyaged to England and back with an all-Kutch crew. Undoubtedly it was Maharao God's intelligent fostering of commercial enterprise which made Kutch so flourishing in his time. There were very few parts of India of which the same could be said during this disturbed era. But he was small, meek and unpretentious in appearance, and miserly in his private life. Moreover he has left a name for cruelty which offsets the credit of his yet a real achievement. There is little doubt that he found the money to sustain his large army by plundering and confiscating the fortune of Diwan Dhanu—more than twenty of them all—during his reign. He was fully aware that this policy would do him no harm either with the bhayats or with the common people; for the Diwan, by the nature of their duties, were drawn mostly from the Jodhpur

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MAHARAO RAYADHAN II, elder son of his father, succeeded Maharao God II in 1778. He was only fourteen at the time and greatly under the influence of his mother. The Queen's private fortune had increased under the management of yet another able Lohana, Dev Chand, in whom she had so much confidence that she persuaded the young Maharao to appoint him Diwan. It appears that this was not Dev Chand's first experience of office; he had from time to time served the late Maharao God II as Diwan. But he had escaped the fate which overtook so many occupants of that perilous if profitable post because his honesty prevented him from accumulating any private fortune. So it was thus never worth the Maharao's while to murder him in order to confiscate his possessions. Whenever his dangerous master showed signs of impatience, Dev Chand found that the protection of the Maharani sufficed to enable him to resign honourably, without peril to himself. The new Diwan had thus enjoyed long experience, not only in the management of the Maharani's *giras* of Mundra, but also in the conduct of State affairs. He had a high reputation for honesty as well as for competence and, under his direction, the administration took on a new efficiency. The royal authority

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was restored; the *bhayyad* were brought into obedience. Dev Chand's main strength lay in his three able brothers, upon whose loyalty he could rely with confidence and in the steady protection of the Maharani, who had the ear of her son. But these were ill days for an honest Minister: vested interests had grown up which could only flourish under conditions of chaos and corruption. The Maharao's bodyguard, among which the Sidi mercenaries had again grown powerful, resented the new firm rule of civil authority. In order to destroy Dev Chand's credit with the young Maharao, and at the same time to deprive the Maharani, the Seth's protector, of power to shield him from harm, the rumour was spread that the Maharani and Dev Chand were paramours and that on his death-bed Maharao God II had bequeathed to his heir the solemn duty of destroying the guilty man and all his family. It is unlikely in the extreme that Maharao Rayadhan believed this story—indeed, it is belied by the fact that his mother retained great influence over him right up to the day of her death. But it seems to have confused his judgment for the time, and rendered him incapable of interfering with the designs of those who were conspiring to destroy Dev Chand.

The main instrument of the conspirators was the commander of the royal bodyguard, a Miyana named Jamal. He began by arresting the Diwan's confidential servant, Mansingh, who was the main channel of communication between Dev Chand and the young Maharao. The Diwan was thus temporarily isolated from his master and had no means of finding out what was going on. Arrangements were made to arrest simultaneously Dev Chand and his three brothers, who were in charge of Anjar, Mundra, and Rapur. This was efficiently carried out. All four were condemned to death and immediately executed before their friends could make a move to save them; while heavy fines, levied upon all their near kinsmen among the Lohanas, went into the pockets of the conspirators. But Jamal was too small a man to exercise the supreme authority which fell vacant after Dev Chand's murder and before long, power



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was seized by a certain Marich, the Sidi Governor of Bhuj.

The luckless young Maharao found himself a pawn in the hands of those who were nominally his servants. His private life had hitherto been exemplary, thanks to the influence of his mother; but the Maharani fell ill about this time. The Maharao, who was plainly devoted to her, did everything in his power to save her life, even to the extent of discarding the services of the Palace physicians, when their remedies proved ineffective, and calling in an English doctor from Bombay—who was no doubt the first Englishman to set foot in Kutch. But his methods, too, proved unavailing and the Maharani died. With her death, following so soon after the murder of Dev Chand, the last healthy influence over the young Maharao disappeared. Those who surrounded him took care to introduce him to every type of vice and debauchery in order to prevent him from intervening in public affairs and thus contributed to the growth of those mental disorders which were to prove so distressing a feature of his unhappy reign.

Sidi Marich, although supreme in Bhuj, could exercise no effective authority in the districts, even if he had possessed the administrative capacity to hold the kingdom together. The representatives of the central government ignored orders from the capital and set themselves up as independent barons. The *bharryad* became petty Maharaos, acknowledging no authority but their own. The whole State began to fall into chaos and confusion and only in the walled cities, like Mandvi, Mundra, and Anjar, where the influence of the wealthy merchants was strong, was even a semblance of order maintained. Tribes of pirates began once more to make their headquarters on the shores of Kutch—a circumstance which, before long, contributed to the process of attracting towards the State the highly unfavourable attention of the British authorities in Bombay, thus opening the way for the extension of British influence over Rao Khengar's kingdom.

In an effort to restore some measure of central authority over the districts—for upon this authority much of the revenue de-



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pended—Sidi Marich sought the help of an able Bania, Wagha Parekh. He was a bad choice. Although he had plenty of energy, he was tactless and overbearing and his first deed was to attack Patri, the headquarters of two Jadeja *bhayyad*, Barra and Jiya, who had been supporters of Dev Chand and the Lohana administrators. No doubt Barra and Jiya had shown their contempt for the Sidi regime; but it was a mistake to pick out Jadejas as the first victims, especially as Barra was killed in a vain defence of his fort, which was carried by storm. The Jadejas rallied to avenge their clansman and Sidi Marich, in alarm, tried to rid himself of his over-zealous lieutenant by attacking him, sword in hand. Wagha Parekh, though wounded, contrived to escape and with the cleverness characteristic of his caste, so won over the angry *bhayyad* and the Maharao's immediate courtiers that he contrived to get Sidi Marich and most of the other Sidis banished. Unfortunately for himself, he could not entirely complete the process. The Maharao, who liked Sidis, had only been persuaded to consent to their dismissal under extreme pressure and insisted on keeping one of his personal favourites, Masid by name. This man, biding his time, was later instrumental in compassing Wagha Parekh's death.

Meanwhile, Kutch was again involved in the affairs of Sind, where lately dramatic events had been taking place. In 1781 an Afghan army had invaded that country in an endeavour to exact the tribute which it owed. Mir Bijar, in spite of his ill-success in Kutch, proved a sufficiently competent general to defeat the invaders. The King, Abdul Nabi Khan, fearing that Mir Bijar's influence would become too great, had him assassinated; whereupon Abdulla Khan Talpur, the son of the murdered man, seized the government. Abdul Nabi Khan, the last ruler of the Kalhora line, which had given so much trouble to Kutch, fled to Kalat and by promising to pay the tribute due, secured aid from the Afghans. As soon as his power was restored, he put Abdul Khan Talpur to death; but Mir Fateh Ali, another Talpur chief, rose in revolt, and Abdul Nabi



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Khan was obliged to flee once again from Sind—this time, for good. He sought refuge in Jodhpur and the Raja of Jodhpur promised to restore him to the throne. The Raja, with a powerful army, advanced through Radhanpur and entered Kutch, in the hope of persuading the Maharao to join in the enterprise. The Jodhpur forces were received with honour but Kutch was in no condition to render them any effective assistance. While negotiations were going on between the Raja of Jodhpur and the Maharao, Mir Fateh Ali Talpur got his blow in first. He struck at the Raja's line of communication by crossing the Rann and entering Kutch at Chowbari in Wagad. There followed an indecisive skirmish but the Jodhpur troops became demoralized and dispersed widely over the countryside, as far as Bhuj and Anjar. Mir Fateh Ali could not press home his success because he had to return to Sind at once: a powerful Afghan army had entered his country to restore the Kalhora dynasty. Eventually he succeeded in making terms with Kabul and in 1783 he was recognized as Rais of Sind by a *farman* from the Afghan King Shah Zaman. He is reckoned the founder of the Talpur line of Sind rulers and he suffered many vicissitudes of fortune. On two occasions, in 1787 and again in 1789, he and his family were obliged to take refuge in Kutch until he could regain power in his own kingdom. But the fact that he did not reside in Bhuj or one of the important towns, but at Dhinodhar, where he enjoyed the hospitality of the Kanphata monks, illustrates the disorder into which Kutch was falling at this period. Even so, the links between Kutch and Sind became close and cordial.

In 1784, when he was twenty years of age, Maharao Rayadhan began to show signs of an unbalanced mind. He was a man of extraordinary physical strength: his popular nickname was Pahlwan (the athlete) and at times it became dangerous to approach him. To begin with, he fell under the influence of a Muslim *fakir*, Mohammed Syed. There was nothing out of the ordinary in this; for the Jadeja dynasty of Kutch had always paid as much respect to Muslim as to Hindu holy men. But the

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completeness of the ascendancy which Mohammed Syed acquired over the Maharao led to rumours that witchcraft was at work and the Maharao's mental disorder soon took a turn which confirmed these rumours in public estimation. He began to roam the streets of Bhuj, accompanied by a band of Pathan followers, demanding that everyone whom he met should profess Islam, regardless of their position or creed, on pain of death. Quite a lot of respectable citizens were killed or wounded in these chance encounters. Moreover, he took a dislike to a prominent Rajgur Brahmin named Udarji, on some trifling count, the details of which have not been preserved and threw him into prison. When Udarji's caste-fellows assembled to petition the Maharao, Rayadhan burst in among them, sword in hand. He inflicted serious wounds on several of them and ordered the property of all of them to be looted. From this time forward he seems to have looked upon Brahmins and Banias as his enemies and he determined to seek them out and attack them. Both castes were at that time, as now, strongly represented in Mandvi, and the Maharao went there to try conclusions with them. He first began by slaughtering animals in large numbers; he then announced his intention of smashing all the images in Rameshvar's temple. He began by maltreating an image of Vageshvar which had been presented to the temple by its builder Princess Kama Bai, sister of Maharao Bharmal I (1585-1632)—the damage which he did to it can still be seen. But he had underestimated the temper of the citizens of Mandvi. They collected in large numbers and attacked the Maharao and his Pathans so fiercely with stones, sticks and other improvised weapons that Rayadhan had to ride for his life, while two of his followers were killed and a number were wounded.

Returning to Bhuj, the Maharao took up his former habits, varying his sallies into the streets to force all passers by to profess Islam by the new pastime of firing his matchlock indiscriminately at any citizen who came within range of the terrace of the Old Palace. The *bharryad*, convinced that the Maharao's



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conduct was bringing the entire regime into disrepute, decided that he should be put under restraint. Wagha Parekh, who had become all-powerful, was of the same opinion. His brother Kora was in command at Anjar, and, being summoned by Wagha, suddenly entered the Palace courtyard with four hundred men of the Anjar garrison. Maharao Rayadhan had only one of his Jamadars, Dosal Vani, with him but with great presence of mind he retired into the upper Mahal of the Palace, broke down the stairway so that he could not be pursued and shouted from the terrace to attract the attention of his bodyguard, now under the command of the Sidi, Masud. Meanwhile Wagha and Kora, with their followers, had seized the lower stories of the Palace and were doing their best to gain access to the upper Mahal. Before they could do this, Masud and the Pathans arrived. Masud paid off his old score. Wagha Parekh, Kora, and all their followers were cut down after a desperate struggle.

This event ushered in a miserable period of anarchy. The administration entirely broke down. Such few orders as came from the capital were ignored in the districts. Mandvi became independent under Ramji Khavas; Anjar revolted under Megji Seth. Mundra, Lakhpat, and all the larger towns followed their example. Disorders broke out in many places, dacoits abounded, land began to go out of cultivation. A number of Miyana brigands entrenched themselves at Baliari and plundered the countryside widely. The smaller country gentlemen and the wealthier peasants flocked to the cities for safety. Only the large landholders, secure in their fortified strongholds, maintained their estates by the strength of the armed clansmen and mercenaries in their service.

The Maharao found himself entirely without funds. Nothing came to Bhuj from the districts. In desperation, he turned against men who had hitherto been faithful to him in all his vagaries. His Muslim preceptor, Mohammed Syed, and his henchman Sidi Masud, were both banished so that their wealth might be confiscated. By thus alienating his friends, Rayadhan



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left himself without support and the increasing ferocity of his senseless attacks upon Hindu temples and images greatly offended the people of Bhuj. His relatives in the Palace and the officers of the bodyguard decided, after making several vain attempts to put him under restraint, to seek help from outside. Megji Seth was informed that if he would advance on the capital from Anjar the gates would be delivered up to him. The conspirators chose a day on which Rayadhan had announced that he would destroy every Hindu temple and image in Bhuj; and when Megji Seth appeared with his forces, he was warmly welcomed and all Bhuj gladly admitted his authority. The Maharao and his Pathan guard returned to the Palace, which was fiercely attacked. Rayadhan showed the utmost bravery, exposing himself time after time to great danger. But after three days, his Pathan guard surrendered and the Maharao was put under restraint.

Since it was plain that he could no longer be trusted to exercise ruling powers, his younger half-brother, Prithiraj, was selected to fill his place; as he was a minor, a council of regency was appointed, with Megji Seth and Dosal Vani as its leading members. Such an arrangement was entirely unprecedented in the history of Kutch. It could only have occurred in the absence of any duly constituted authority, because of the breakdown of the royal administration. The *bhayyad* had no power to dispose a Maharao, to appoint a successor, or to set up a council of regency. However reasonable such an arrangement might appear to those who took part in it, it had no justification in the customary law of the Jadeja house, or indeed of Kutch. It was pure usurpation. In law, Maharao Rayadhan was still ruler.

Prince Prithiraj, or Bhaiji Bawa, as he was commonly called, was entrusted with no authority: all power was exercised by the council of regency, the *Bara Bhai*, of whom the leading members were not Jadejas at all. The Bara Bhai made some show of restoring the central Government: they obliged Ramji Khavas to pay heavily for retaining control of Mandvi and to recognize the suzerainty of Bhuj. But before long, dis-



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sension overtook the 'new men' who were exercising usurped authority. Megji Seth allied himself with Maharani Imma Bai, the mother of Prince Prithiraj, by sending a force against a Jadeja baron, Visraji of Roha, who was behaving badly to his wife, a kinswoman of Imma Bai. The baron agreed to treat his wife honourably and to give her a proper allowance, without any fighting: but the Bara Bhai were opposed to any action which might expose them to the hostility of the *bhayyad* and Megji Seth was severely criticized by his colleagues. So ill did he take their strictures that he made a deliberate effort to poison them at a dinner to which he had invited them as a gesture of feigned reconciliation: but the plot failed, and he fled to Anjar, where he made himself again independent of Bhuj. As he was by far the ablest member of the Bara Bhai and had the support of Bhaiji Bawa's mother, his absence greatly weakened the council. He made a compact with Ramji Khavas in Mandvi and the two of them agreed to oppose the Bara Bhai by force.

Dosal Vani and the rest of the Bara Bhai determined to subdue Mandvi as a first step towards reasserting their authority. Maharani Imma Bai kept both Megji Seth and Ramji Khavas informed of everything that happened and arranged to accompany the forces, led by Dosal Vani, which marched to besiege Mandvi. Agreeable to the plan arranged, Ramji Khavas offered to surrender Mandvi to the Maharani in trust for her son. Dosal Vani, even if he had reason to suspect this proposal, could find no grounds for refusing it. But when Maharani Imma Bai entered Mandvi, she had the gates closed and denounced Dosal Vani and the Bara Bhai in the name of Bhaiji Bawa. The Bara Bhai were thrown into confusion, and were obliged to beat a hasty retreat before the forces which Megji Seth was sending from Anjar to support the Maharani and Ramji Khavas, whose position as Thanadar of Mandvi was confirmed.

The Maharani continued to reside in Mandvi while Dosal Vani and the remainder of the Bara Bhai returned to Bhuj.



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Renewed quarrels broke out in the council and, to make the confusion worse, two members of the Bara Bhai, Batir Hamir and Turk Wadina, formed a faction of their own and contrived to arrange for Maharao Rayadhan's release from custody. Dosal Vani and the rest of the Bara Bhai promptly fled in all directions—Dosal Vani himself setting up as an independent ruler in Mundra. The liberators of the Maharao sought the help of Megji Seth and his party. Together they ruled Bhuj for a time. This was in 1786.

But Maharao Rayadhan, in spite of his mental instability, was no puppet: the kingmakers of Kutch at this period, trying to make use of him as the partisans of York and Lancaster had long before tried to make use of the feeble-minded King Henry VI of England during the Wars of the Roses, found their task almost impossible. In the intervals of his madness, Rayadhan was shrewd enough. He soon began to suspect Megji Seth of aiming at supreme power and began to show favour to an extremely able, but until then quite unknown man, Jamadar Fateh Mohammed. His selection of Jamadar Fateh Mohammed was a master-stroke.

This remarkable soldier-statesman, whose record is written large in the annals of Kutch, belonged to a family which had originally come from Sind, and, in its time, had held considerable landed property in Kutch. But Fateh Mohammed, a member of a cadet branch of the family, possessed no property; was entirely illiterate and, when Maharao Rayadhan took him up, was only a Jamadar in charge of twenty foot soldiers. His ability was as conspicuous as his energy and before long, as the Maharao's favourite, he managed to subvert all Megji Seth's troops from their allegiance to their employer and to win them to the Maharao's interest. The Maharao was again master of the situation: his authority might have been completely restored had not another fit of violent madness overtaken him. One day, when Jamadar Fateh Mohammed presented himself, as usual, for orders, the Maharao fell upon him with a dagger and the Jamadar would have been killed forthwith had he not been



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exceptionally agile. Fateh Mohammed fled for his life to his home; but Maharao Rayadhan, with the energy which characterized all his actions whether he was sane or mad, pursued him hotly. The Jamadar, with a few of the men under his immediate command, took refuge in one of the fortified towers of the city wall, and held it stoutly for two days against a siege led by the Maharao in person.

Jamadar Fateh Mohammed appears to have been entirely loyal to the Maharao up to this point; and had certainly no idea of seizing power himself. Since the Maharao had become impossible as a master, and since Megji Seth was an enemy, the Jamadar was obliged to transfer his allegiance to Dosal Vani. Fateh Mohammed sent messages to Mundra, asking Dosal Vani to return to Bhuj. As soon as Dosal Vani arrived, he took over control and recalled those members of the Bara Bhai who remained on his side. Out of gratitude, he appointed Jamadar Fateh Mohammed to the Council and promoted him to the command of 200 horse. The Maharao was again confined.

But Fateh Mohammed found Dosal Vani an unsatisfactory leader. Dosal Vani not only treated Maharao Rayadhan with great disrespect, he also despised Bhajji Bawa and refused to acknowledge him as head of the State. Such arrogance was very impudent because the *bhayyad*, although they were quite ready to increase their own power and prestige at the expense of the Maharao, were far from content to see authority passing into the hands of an adventurer like Dosal Vani. Fateh Mohammed, with the political flair which was among his most noticeable qualities, saw what was happening and began to cultivate friends for himself among the officers of the troops who were in Bhuj. Having thus built up for himself a position of some influence in the capital, he went to Abdasa, where the *bhayyad* were strong, and began to cultivate friends for himself among the Jadeja barons. They were angry enough already with Dosal Vani and when Fateh Mohammed convinced them that they stood to gain a great deal if Jadeja rule should be

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restored in the person of Bhaiji Bawa, he got plenty of support among them also.

Seizing the opportunity presented by Dosal Vani's temporary absence from Bhuj, the Jamadar appeared in the capital, restored Bhaiji Bawa to his dignities and took over authority himself. He behaved with the utmost tact and paid the most scrupulous respect to the young Prince, consulting him on every occasion before taking action. He increased the royal allowance to the Jadeja *bhayyad* and disarmed any possible jealousy from that quarter by his courteous affability. At the same time he showed the soldiers that he was a soldier himself, increasing the royal forces and taking the greatest interest in their discipline, equipment and morale. Dosal Vani was left in peace at Mundra but other members of the Bara Bhai were either exiled or imprisoned.

It was in 1786 that Jamadar Fateh Mohammed took over the administration of the State. He showed himself capable of furnishing that guiding hand of which the whole country had felt the absence since Maharao Rayadhan had begun to rule. The situation of Kutch was such as to tax all his great powers. The internal affairs of the State had been for some time in complete confusion but of late even worse things had happened to the unhappy people through the ravages and depredations from outside. Robbers from Gujarat, Parkar and Sind roamed the country unchecked: Wagad in particular suffered terribly from their plundering raids. The Jamadar decided that the essential first step was to give the districts effective protection. He took up residence in Wagad and waged war against the robbers with a powerful force. Before many months had passed, order was restored: local magnates who had profited from the general confusion by maintaining their own private bands of plunderers were given a stern lesson when Hajaji, Thakur of the town of Samwah, was attacked in overwhelming force, his stronghold looted and destroyed and his following either killed or driven into exile. The dues of the central Government were collected for the first time for many years;



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every nest of robbers was cleared up and the authority of Bhuj was again recognized throughout Wagad. The submission of Wagad was quickly followed elsewhere: in the whole of Kutch only two cities refused to submit. Mundra, where Dosal Vani held out, was attacked and taken; its former master was allowed to retire on a small allowance to Betta in Abdasa. It was put in charge of a Bania named Hansraj, whose life Fateh Mohammed had saved when they were both servants of Dosal Vani. Mandvi proved more difficult; it was very wealthy, and the Thanadar who commanded it was able to buy friends in influential positions. Jamadar Fateh Mohammed decided to wait for his opportunity.

Meanwhile, two other enterprises engaged him, although neither was allowed to interfere with his reorganization of the Kingdom and his appointment of competent, loyal officers to do justice and to assert the royal authority—as when he obtained for the Maharao the entire district of Bhachau, in Wagad, and by good management made it among the most prosperous and populous Durbar territories. The first enterprise was the assertion of Kutch's claim to Balambha in Nawanagar, which had been taken over by the Jams in the time of Maharao God II. Fateh Mohammed made no serious effort to reoccupy the place but he insisted that tribute should regularly be paid for it and he launched expeditions year after year to insure that his demands were complied with. The Ruler of Nawanagar could not resist the forces which Kutch sent against him but he would never pay the tribute of his own free will: it had always to be extorted from him. It has been indeed suggested that Fateh Mohammed was more anxious to exercise his army than to settle the Balambha question and that for this reason he was quite content to keep Kutch's rights alive by this method of asserting them. The other enterprise which interested him particularly was the establishment of a strong fort and a prosperous port at Lakhpat. The plan was useful in two ways. It was an effective bulwark against any future hostile activity by the Sind Amirs, now divided into independent branches which were



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generally quarrelling among themselves. It also exploited the natural possibilities of trade along the eastern mouth of the Indus. Like almost everything which Fateh Mohammed took up, the development of Lakhpat proved successful; but the Jamadar and the kingdom did not reap the full fruits of the enterprise for some time.

It was now the turn of Mandvi. Jamadar Fateh Mohammed realized that it was impossible to reduce such a wealthy port by the ordinary procedure of siege and assault; and with the eye of a born tactician he hit on a plan which proved effective. He instructed Hansraj to collect a flotilla of boats secretly at Mundra. A naval expedition was then planned to intercept the annual fleets of Mandvi vessels which returned from East Africa and the Red Sea. Every ship was captured and brought to Mundra; the whole commercial life of Mandvi came to a standstill. The Mandvi merchants, facing ruin, decided that they could no longer afford the expensive luxury of defying the authority of Bhuj; they sought out Jamadar Fateh Mohammed to seek terms. With considerable adroitness, the Jamadar restored all the ships and cargoes unconditionally; whereupon the merchants of Mandvi gladly made over the city to his officers. Hansraj was put in command as a reward for his share in the successful upshot of the affair.

With the submission of Mandvi, the whole of Kutch once more acknowledged the royal authority and complete tranquility reigned. The wise rule of Jamadar Fateh Mohammed steadily advanced the country to its former prosperity: there seemed no reason why another golden age should not dawn. But the Jamadar's power depended wholly upon the fact that he was the Diwan of Bhaiji Bawa. That Prince was now beginning to pass out of his minority and in spite of Fateh Mohammed's respectful bearing towards him, he became more and more jealous of the Jamadar's power and influence. Nor were there wanting plenty of interested persons to make as much mischief as possible, chief among them being a Jamadar named Morji. In 1801, at a pleasure-party on the Bhuj lake,



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Bhaiji Bawa took too much to drink and picked a quarrel with the Jamadar. He accused him of treason and, working himself up into a fury, attacked him. Matters were patched up but soon afterwards Bhaiji Bawa demanded the revenues of Mandvi for himself. The request was refused but Bhaiji Bawa and his party contrived to win over Hansraj. One day, when Fateh Mohammed was away in Lakhpat, Bhaiji Bawa rode to Mandvi with an escort of troops from Bhachau, whose garrison-commander, Mohammed Miyan, had been won over by Morji and was admitted to the city. Hansraj declared for him and drove out the militia who remained loyal to Fateh Mohammed. At the same time, Bhaiji Bawa entered into negotiations with the Thakur of Morvi for a body of troops. The Jamadar hastened back from Lakhpat and despatched a force under Askaran Seth to prevent the invasion. The Morvi troops were intercepted and badly defeated before they could reach Bhaiji Bawa at Mandvi and a detachment sent out by Hansraj to link up with them was also crushed. But in spite of this success, the tide began to turn against the Jamadar, since he could no longer claim to be acting in the name of Bhaiji Bawa. His own officer at Lakhpat defected to Hansraj and he was obliged to recall Askaran Seth from his victorious campaign in order to concentrate his supporters round the capital.

As so often happens in circumstances like these, everyone who had cause to dislike Fateh Mohammed, or had been resentful of his strong administration, hastened to join Bhaiji Bawa. That Prince found his supporters so numerous that he was able to gather an overwhelming force outside Bhuj. Fateh Mohammed judged further resistance useless, and agreed to surrender the capital in return for Anjar and Bhachau. But before he left Bhuj he freed Maharao Rayadhan, who proved a troublesome legacy to Bhaiji Bawa and Hansraj. To make matters worse, before the year 1801 was out, Bhaiji Bawa died suddenly. The Maharao, who had submitted to long years of restraint with fairly good grace out of respect for his brother, now insisted upon ruling once again. He turned out to be as



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violent as ever and very nearly killed Hansraj, who had become Diwan. Hansraj returned to Mandvi and safety but the Maharao, who had no money and no administration, was soon obliged to recall him. Hansraj came back and took charge of things, managing to confine the Maharao once more. Being a man of some insight, he despaired of the future of Kutch under existing conditions and he began to think very seriously of coming to terms with the East India Company, who were already at this time extending their influence in Gujarat and Kathiawad. He made some overtures to the Government of Bombay, asking them to mediate between Fateh Mohammed and himself and offering to cede Kutch to them on condition that suitable provision was made to maintain Maharao Rayadhan in his dignities. But nothing came of the idea; the British were not yet interested in Kutch and, in any case, were not anxious to increase their responsibilities while the Marathas were contending with them for power in India. The invitation was twice repeated; on one occasion, in 1804, Hansraj and Jamadar Fateh Mohammed jointly proffered it: the Bombay Government considered it carefully, but decided that they could gain no advantage from intervening in Kutchi affairs.

Fateh Mohammed remained quietly in Anjar, devoting his energies to building up a port at Tuna, just as he had built one up at Lakhpat. But the work was expensive and as he no longer commanded the Durbar revenues, he began to levy a number of exactions upon his supporters, among them being Askaran Seth. Askaran Seth, annoyed at this treatment, asked Hansraj to attack Anjar and himself joined the attacking force. Fateh Mohammed was too strong for them and they retired to Bhuj. As soon as Hansraj paid one of his frequent visits to Mandvi—the management of which needed constant attention—Askaran Seth revolted, set free Maharao Rayadhan, and became Diwan. His son was held in Anjar as security for the claims against him and he did his best to capture the town to release the lad. Again the attack ended in failure. Askaran Seth was at his wits' end for money, for the districts would not



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acknowledge his position, and no money came in. He proceeded to seize the possessions of a number of wealthy Bhuj citizens. A riot followed and Maharao Rayadhan was easily persuaded to order Askaran Seth's death. The luckless Diwan saved himself by taking sanctuary in Mohammed Shah's mosque, and then fled to Sind. This was in 1804.

For the moment there was no rival in the field who could challenge Jamadar Fateh Mohammed for the possession of the capital. He advanced on Bhuj and soon made himself master of it. But Maharao Rayadhan had taken a great dislike to him, and decided to turn him out. The Maharao led an attack in person and was accidentally shot in the foot. The Jamadar's power was soon re-established; but the wounding of the Maharao, though quite unintentional, injured Fateh Mohammed's prestige with the ordinary people and he never regained the esteem and affection which he had once enjoyed. Indeed, the second period of his administration, which lasted from 1804 to his death in 1813, has often been described by Kutch writers as a sad anti-climax when it is compared with the benevolence and humanity of his rule during the minority of Bhaiji Bawa. A number of explanations have been suggested: the favourite one is that the misfortunes and the ingratitude which he had experienced had soured his character. It seems more likely, however, that he was convinced by experience of the impossibility of building up any stable structure of administration except on a foundation of fear. He had found that loyalty to the succession of masters whom he had served so well had proved wasted; he had treated his subordinates with the utmost consideration, only to be deserted by them in the time of his need. From the time when he began to exercise power for a second time, he worked on the principle of making people afraid to disobey his orders. Unfortunately for himself, however, disorder had gone so far that it was now difficult to arrest; resistance to the authority of the central Government had become the rule in every district. Jamadar Fateh Mohammed had always been a soldier by instinct; he now began to apply purely military methods to the



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solution of the difficulties, of whatever nature, he encountered. Since he had found that locally-recruited troops could not always be trusted to remain faithful to him in adverse circumstances, he began to engage mercenaries from Sind, Rajputana, and Kathiawad. These men had no ties with or attachment to anyone in Kutch except the Jamadar himself and with their assistance he proceeded to build up almost absolute authority. But he was unwilling to expose them to the losses and frustrations inseparable from long sieges; he preferred to keep their strength intact and to use them in rapid operations. For this reason he never pushed home his attempts to seize Lakhpat and Mandvi, against which he made several expeditions: and both cities remained independent under the control of Hansraj, who formed a rallying point, until his death in 1809, for everyone in Kutch who disliked Jamadar Fateh Mohammed.

The year 1809 is important in Kutch history as marking the first formal connection between the Jadeja Maharaos and the East India Company. The influence of the British had now established itself firmly in Gujarat. The Gaekwar, who exercised tributary rights over almost all the Kathiawad States, had become their subordinate ally. The British Resident in Baroda, Colonel Walker, had lately succeeded in arranging for the payment of the Gaekwar's dues by the Kathiawad Princes upon a fixed basis, without the extortions and oppressions which had marked the annual collections by force of Maratha arms. The British authorities do not seem to have cherished any particular designs against Kutch; indeed they had declined no fewer than three invitations to mediate between the factions and to take over the State. But between 1804 and 1809 circumstances combined to increase the importance of Kutch in the estimation of the Company. The first of the factors which induced the change was the hostility of the Talpur Amirs of Sind, who were showing themselves consistently unfriendly to the British, and from time to time threatened that they would use Kutch as a basis of operations against British influence in Gujarat. Since the relations between Kutch and Sind were so



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friendly, and Kutch was so disunited by the rivalry between Fateh Mohammed and Hansraj that it might readily have lent itself to any designs favoured by the Amirs, there was undoubtedly a certain risk to British power in western India from that quarter. This particular danger might, or might not, materialize; although the Company were not likely to forget that Jamadar Fateh Mohammed had at one time been in friendly correspondence with Tipu Sultan and other of their enemies. (Some of the Anjar artillery came from Seringapatam.) But the second factor, at least, was one which admitted no speculation—the continued interference from the Kutch side, by land and by sea, with persons who were under the Company's influence or protection. During the first ten years of the nineteenth century, dacoits from the Wagad district raided ceaselessly across the Rann into Kathiawad and, besides, there was more than one official expedition from Kutch to enforce upon Nawanagar the old claim for tribute. From the Company's point of view, both the raids and the expeditions were an unwarranted interference. Quite as serious as these incursions by land were the piracies, organized from the Kutch ports in general and from Mandvi in particular, which harassed shipping, interfered with trade and caused loss and inconvenience to the Company's allies and subjects. The Kathiawad pirates were also a serious nuisance; but they at least could be—and were—dealt with: whereas the Kutchi pirates were beyond the Company's jurisdiction. Moreover, the Mandvi authorities claimed to impose a heavy tax upon all vessels—even British vessels—entering the Gulf of Kutch.

In addition to these considerations, which together contributed to make Kutch a country of some importance in the estimation of the East India Company, there was a further factor which weighed with the British. Britain was now engaged in the long struggle with Napoleon, whose ambition to strike a blow at her eastern territories was well known. French emissaries had for some time been active in strengthening opposition to British influence among those Rulers who



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remained independent of the East India Company: it had become a fixed objective of British policy in India to exclude both French and American subjects from every part of India to which British influence could penetrate. It was in pursuit of this policy that the Company concluded an arrangement with Sind by which foreigners were forbidden to settle there, although the Amirs still remained suspicious and hostile towards the British. From the British point of view, the arguments for making a similar arrangement with Kutch were greatly reinforced by the necessity of some agreement to stop Kutch depredations.

The isolated position of Kutch had made it virtually unknown to the British, although the extension of their influence into Kathiawad at this time brought them, as it were, to its very threshold. From time to time, British emissaries were despatched to Bhuj; it was from one of them—Captain Seton—that the Company received in 1804 a detailed report about the practice, then widely prevalent, of female infanticide among the Jadeja Rajputs of Kutch. During these early years of the nineteenth century, when the abolition of slavery and other humanitarian causes were beginning to attract great attention in Britain, such a custom as this excited the utmost horror and reprobation among the Company's servants; and Colonel Walker, who had successfully persuaded the Jadeja Princes in Kathiawad to agree to its suppression, sent a message to Jamadar Fateh Mohammed in 1807, asking him to put down the practice in Kutch. But the Jamadar, who had his hands full of political troubles and who was not anxious to increase—gratuitously, as it seemed to him—Jadeja hostility, refused to intervene on the ground that infanticide was a long-standing custom sanctioned by religion. This refusal no doubt supplied a further argument, if one were needed, for the men who were eager to extend the advantage of nineteenth-century humanitarianism to Kutch. It was to be some time before the Company were ready to make the suppression of female infanticide a condition of their agreements with the Jadeja Maharaos.



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Meanwhile, in 1809, the urgent thing from the British point of view was to stop Kutchi raiding across the Rann into Kathiawad, whether by Durbar troops or by bands of dacoits, to put down piracy and to keep out foreign influences.

Since there was no single authority which could conclude an agreement that would be effective for the whole of Kutch, Colonel Walker was forced to negotiate separately with Jamadar Fateh Mohammed and with Diwan Hansraj—both of whom professed to be acting on behalf of Maharao Rayadhan. Accordingly two separate agreements were made by Captain Greenwood, Colonel Walker's representative, on October 26 and 28, 1809, by which Jamadar Fateh Mohammed and Diwan Hansraj each undertook to prevent troops from crossing into Kathiawad; to accept arbitration in any dispute arising out of claims upon Nawanagar and other States; to suppress piracy and to expel those convicted of it and to forbid any European or American power to set up an establishment in Kutch. Hansraj was more favourably disposed towards the British than was Jamadar Fateh Mohammed—possibly because his position was more vulnerable. On November 12, 1809, he invited an Agent of the Company, with a guard of forty men, to reside in Mandvi at his expense; and further put Mandvi and its dependencies under the Company's protection by arranging for two battalions of Company's troops to be assigned for its defence if it were attacked. He also undertook to enter into any accommodation with Fateh Mohammed of which the Company might approve. But very soon after this agreement was accepted by the Company, Hansraj died: neither his brother Tokarji nor his son Shivraj, who succeeded him, carried it into effect.

None of the agreements of 1809 was effective: indeed their main importance is that they conveyed undertakings on behalf of Kutch which brought that country into direct contact with the British, thus paving the way, when these undertakings were not observed, for direct British intervention into Kutchi affairs. Hansraj's successors did nothing to suppress the pirates,



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who were suspected by the British of sharing their spoils with influential protectors in Mandvi. On the few occasions when the pirates were actually arrested, they nearly always escaped from custody by some 'unfortunate accident'. Nor did Fateh Mohammed allow the provisions of the agreement to hamper his own activities in any way. He sacked a wealthy town near Radhanpur. He marched in full force to settle his differences with Nawanagar by force of arms, only desisting from his intention when he was informed by an official of the Company that Colonel Walker was advancing at the head of a British force to attack him.

Sundarji Seth, the man who gave this friendly warning, was a Kutchi who had a remarkable career, culminating in the lucrative appointment of the Company's Agent in Kathiawad. He had started in humble circumstances but soon developed a remarkable flair for trading in horses, a business which he conducted from Mandvi. It so happened that two British merchants came to Kutch to sell arms to the Durbar; but in the confused conditions then prevailing, they incurred the hostility of some powerful courtiers and were accused of espionage, arrested and imprisoned. Sundarji, who had previously had dealings with British firms in Bombay, was convinced that the merchants meant no harm: he procured their release and arranged a safe conduct for them. They showed their gratitude, when Sundarji next visited Bombay, by putting him in touch with the British military authorities, who provided an excellent market for all the horses which he could supply. He became the leading horse-contractor of the day and in his dealings with the Company officials he showed so much intelligence and sterling honesty that he was engaged to help in the settlement of the Gaekwar's interests in Kathiawad. He never forgot the land of his birth and his extensive benefaction to the famous temples of Koteswar, Ashar Mata, Dhinodhar, Rawal Pir and many other holy places are still remembered.

Sundarji Seth's warning seems to have been so far effective that Jamadar Fateh Mohammed undertook no more official



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incursions across the Rann into the Company's sphere of influence. But he either could not or would not restrain the operations of the bandits of Wagad. He did, it is true, set up some Durbar posts; but these proved no real obstacle to bands of dacoits who were accustomed to slip between them and raid into Kathiawad. When the Company remonstrated with him, he argued that the best way to hamper the activities of the dacoits was to set up posts on the other side of the Rann: he followed up this recommendation by establishing a Durbar outpost at Santhalpur. When the Company asked the Jamadar to withdraw from this position, because his occupation of it was contrary to the agreement of 1809, he washed his hands of all responsibility and there is some reason to believe that he protected certain notorious robbers who were willing to pay the price which he demanded.

The Company were now getting very tired of Kutchi depredations by land and by sea, which seemed to grow more vicious as time went on. Towards the end of 1812, a British envoy, Lieutenant MacMurdo, was sent to Mandvi with instructions to convey warnings both to Jamadar Fateh Mohammed and to Shivraj that serious steps would be taken unless piracy was put down and the incursions into Kathiawad came to an end. MacMurdo, who was provided with a strong flotilla, was also instructed to visit all the ports of Kutch towards the Sind side and to look into affairs at Karachi and Sihra in Sind itself. The considerable marine force placed at his disposal gave him the necessary status.

Lieutenant MacMurdo, who was shortly to be promoted Captain, was a remarkable man whose close study of Kutchi affairs began to bring him into prominence. He had a complete mastery of the language; and there is a widely-believed tradition among the Kutchi people that before he was officially sent to Mandvi as the Company's envoy, he had visited Kutch in the disguise of a Saddhu. He was thus able to make his way into Anjar, where he lived for some time, and there formed an estimate of the relative strength of the various political parties



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which must have been of great service to his employers. So thoroughly did he sink himself into the life of the country, the tradition runs, that he acquired fame as 'Bharia Bawa', and even some local reputation for sanctity. Whatever substance there may be in this story, it is plain that MacMurdo had somehow acquired a good knowledge of Kutchi conditions and a real affection for the Kutchi people. Thus equipped, he worked hard for nearly twelve months to bring about some accommodation which would satisfy the Company without involving them in active intervention of the type which would bring Kutch's independence virtually to an end. But circumstances were against him. Remonstrances to Shivraj produced plenty of promises but no performance: while Jamadar Fateh Mohammed was contemptuous enough of British authority to take under his protection in Bhuj a Sindhi who had escaped from Nawanagar to Kutch after assassinating a British officer, Captain Phelan. By August 13, 1813, the Company lost patience and addressed an ultimatum to the Jamadar, warning him that unless the depredations across the Rann ceased, effective action would be taken to enforce the agreement of 1809.

Before Fateh Mohammed could reply to this letter, he died of the bubonic plague on October 5, 1813. This frightful visitation had made its appearance in Kutch in 1812, and had already raged for several months, causing heavy mortality in the cities. Circumstances were favourable for its spread, because the disturbed conditions of the countryside, resulting from civil war between Bhuj and Mandvi and from contests for power between local rivals, had driven many people to take refuge inside the towns, where at least they would be safe from the robbers who swarmed everywhere. No statistics are available, but contemporary estimates, although not exact, indicate that almost half the population fell victims to the disease. The outbreak spread from Kutch to Gujarat and Kathiawad, where it raged with almost equal ferocity.

Unfortunately, not even this national calamity could bring peace to the distracted realm of Kutch. The authority which



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Fateh Mohammed had built up so ruthlessly was inherited peaceably by his two elder sons, Hussain Miyan and Ibrahim Miyan. Of late years, the Jamadar had relied very much upon the administrative ability of an able Brahmin, Jagjivan Mehta, whose services he had commended, with his dying breath, to his heirs.

The Jamadar's trust in Jagjivan Mehta had already excited some jealousy. The Jamadar's wife, who was a connection of Mohammed Miyan, still in charge of Mundra, hated the Brahmin. Ibrahim Miyan, though the younger son, was the abler and the more ambitious of the two brothers and was ready to listen to those who considered Jagjivan Mehta too powerful. Quite soon after the Jamadar died, a plot was made to murder his trusted adviser. It was only frustrated because the Arabs of the Bodyguard, who liked him, decided to protect him.

At this period, for the first and last time in the history of Kutch, a Hindu and a Muslim party found themselves rivals for power. For many centuries the country had been entirely free from communal feeling and among the Jadejas, Hindu and Muslim saints were held in equal honour: Hindu and Muslim ceremonies and observances were equally respected. But Maharao Rayadhan's disordered mind had of late taken an exaggerated delight in the extremest austerities practised by religious devotees. He no longer roamed the streets compelling passers by to declare their acceptance of Islam: instead, he sat for hours at a time, dressed as a fakir, reciting the Koran and telling his beads. He had built a tomb and mosque inside the palace, and had left specific instructions that he was to be buried therein in accordance with the rites of Islam. This was a great innovation, and astonished everyone: for the Royal House had always been cremated, according to Rajput custom.

The unlucky Maharao, whose mental instability had brought so many misfortunes upon his country, died on October 30, 1813, less than a month after his great Diwan Fateh Mohammed. Ibrahim Miyan made ready to carry out the late Maharao's



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instructions for burial; but the Rajput *bhayyad* who were in the palace, under the leadership of Jagjivan Mehta, seized the corpse, and cremated it with the customary ritual. An open split then developed between the Muslim party of the late Jamadar and the Rajput faction, which was aggravated by a dispute as to who should succeed Maharao Rayadhan II on the *gadi*.

Rayadhan II had left no acknowledged heir; the possible candidates were Mansingh, a natural son, and his nephew Ladobha, son of the late Bhaji Bawa. There is reason to suppose that Ladobha, now a boy of twelve, who had been brought up with his cousin Mansingh, now eighteen, had been recognized by some people as the heir during the Maharao's lifetime: but the assertion of Raikes (Bombay Govt. Selections XV.20) that the agreements of 1809 were made by Colonel Walker with Maharao Rayadhan and with Kumar Ladobha as his heir is baseless, as Aitchison's text (*Treaties*, VI, 1085) shows. The succession, in fact, was quite open and rival factions ranged themselves behind each candidate. The boys remained excellent friends and seem to have known little of what was going on. Mansingh had a very able and attractive sister, Princess Kesar Bai, with whom at one time Ibrahim Miyan had had a childish love affair—which was nipped in the bud by Jamadar Fateh Mohammed, who had a strong sense of the proprieties except where his own behaviour was concerned. When Ibrahim Miyan succeeded to power, his old friendship with the brother and sister inclined him to press Mansingh's claims, which were accordingly endorsed by the party of the late Jamadar Fateh Mohammed, including Mohammed Miyan of Mundra, Dosal Vani, and other influential leaders. Mansingh was accordingly set on the *gadi* on January 13, 1814, with the title of Maharao Bharmal II. Jagjivan Mehta, along with the Rajput courtiers, had supported Ladhoba. Hussain Miyan, who disliked being overshadowed by his younger and more energetic brother—with whom, none the less, he remained good friends—showed signs of agreeing with Jagjivan Mehta, especially as Mohammed Miyan of



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Mundra began to give himself great airs as a king-maker.

While these manoeuvres were going on, the East India Company were waiting for a reply to the ultimatum which had been addressed to the late Jamadar Fateh Mohammed and Captain MacMurdo was still in Morvi to receive the answer. The deaths of Maharao Rayadhan and of the Jamadar naturally altered the complexion of affairs; and the Company sent a very civil message to Hussain Miyan, as the Jamadar's eldest son, asking him to receive a Company's Agent in Bhuj. The reply was favourable, and an able Maratha, Raghoba Appa, was accordingly sent by the Company. He was well received by Hussain Miyan; reported favourably both on him and on Jagjivan Mehta and successfully put forward a request that Captain MacMurdo should be invited to Bhuj. Mohammed Miyan of Mundra disliked the turn which events were taking; and returned to Mundra in disgust after failing to cancel the invitation to Captain MacMurdo. When Captain MacMurdo arrived, he took up with Hussain Miyan all the grievances of the Company—Santhalpur: the protection of notable pirates: the asylum for the Sindhi assassin: the raids from Wagad into Kathiawad—and received conciliatory replies upon all of them; but before he left the country, he had witnessed Mohammed Miyan's defiance of Hussain Miyan's orders from the safety of the walls of Mundra and had formed the definite impression that there was no one in Kutch with sufficient authority to keep the kingdom peaceful and secure.

Before long, MacMurdo's conclusions were appallingly confirmed. Ibrahim Miyan, defying his brother's authority, allied himself closely with Mohammed Miyan of Mundra, raided Anjar and sent Dosal Vani against Shivraj in Mandvi. Civil war broke out and the dacoits of Wagad, seizing their opportunity, redoubled their raiding activities across the Rann, pillaging some sixty villages in Kathiawad. The East India Company now definitely lost their temper and told Hussain Miyan that they proposed to follow up the dacoits into Kutch territory; to charge the Durbar with the expenses of these operations and



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to apply to making good the damage done by the dacoits the sums which Nawanagar owed to Kutch by way of tribute. Whatever may have been the provocation given to the Company—and, as we have seen, it was serious—the effect of this message was to affront Kutchi pride and bring into disrepute anyone who favoured friendship with the British. Had the Company's message been followed by instant action the effect might have been good; but, contrary to MacMurdo's advice, no force appeared to back up the demand. The Kutchis thought that the Company was bluffing. Hussain Miyan made common cause with Ibrahim Miyan. Jagjivan Mehta, who was known to wish for good relations with the Company, but who had lost popularity with the Arab Bodyguard because of his share in the funeral ceremonies of Maharao Rayadhan, was seized and executed by the orders of Ibrahim Miyan. This brutal action was resented in Bhuj and outside. Popular resentment encouraged Shivraj of Mandvi to take a hand in the politics of the capital. The young Maharao Bharmal was now anxious to free himself from the clique which surrounded him and sent to Shivraj for assistance. Shivraj gathered a force, and advanced on Bhuj; but before he arrived, Ibrahim Miyan had been assassinated by a Marwari soldier with a private grievance. In revenge, Hussain Miyan killed or expelled all the other Marwari troops in the garrison and relied entirely on the Arab mercenaries. This left him in no case to resist Shivraj, who had been joined by Askaran Seth and some of the *bhayyad*; he had to promise to leave Bhuj along with the Arabs, in return for the grant of Anjar, Bhachau, Kanthkot and other territories. Maharao Bharmal appointed Shivraj and Askaran Seth as his ministers and took control of the administration. This was in January 1815.

The Maharao was neither inclined to acquiesce on the Company's terms, nor to defy British authority. He asked the Company to appoint Sundarji as their agent in Bhuj instead of Raghoba Appa. When they refused, he expelled Raghoba Appa. But the Maharao was too inexperienced and the situation



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became too difficult, for things to go on much longer as they were. Shivraj and Askaran Seth soon quarrelled: Mohammed Miyan defied the royal authority in Mundra; Hussain Miyan was turned out of Kanthkot. Worse still, Maharao Bharmal made the mistake of quarrelling with some of the more powerful of the Jadeja *bhayyad*. Had he been as strong as his ancestors, he might have been justified in attacking and destroying Asambia and in fining its chief; but during Maharao Rayadhan's reign, the Durbar had lost prestige and the *bhayyad* had now less respect for it. Moreover Jamadar Fateh Mohammed's actions in extending the royal domains at the expense of the feudal landlords had alarmed the *bhayyad* very much: they were now determined to limit the Maharao's powers in favour of their own. Before long British intervention was to afford them an opportunity of doing this.

Successive failures by the Company to make good their threats to use force, if their demands for redress were not met, seem to have convinced both the Maharao and many of his officers that the British would never take serious action. Accordingly, when a mixed field force of Company and Gaekwar troops advanced on Jodia in Kathiawad, with orders to reduce it for its disobedience to the Jamsaheb of Nawanager, Shivraj did not hesitate to supply the rebellious town with arms and ammunition. This action seemed to the Company the last straw in their burden of grievances against Kutch, for a little while previously, in August 1815, dacoits from Wagad had crossed the Rann in force and had actually attacked Captain MacMurdo's camp at Ghatela. The Maharao was, however, startled by the rapidity with which Jodia was reduced by the British. Thinking that he would be wise to take some action to meet the Company's demands, he moved into Wagad and made a serious effort to punish the bandits who had attacked the Ghatela camp. But the Company, having at long last troops available within striking distance of Kutch, now decided to settle their account with the Durbar. The field force, which had taken Jodia, was told to stand by for possible action in Kutch and in



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the middle of November 1815, a letter was delivered to the Maharao warning him that the troops would advance into Kutch unless he undertook to compensate the British and their allies for the damage done by the Wagad bandits: to meet the expenses to which the Company and the Gaekwar's Government had been put: to promise specifically to prevent dacoities and piracies in future and to give satisfaction for his behaviour in refusing to send a representative to Captain MacMurdo and in expelling the Company's agent from Bhuj.

The Maharao returned no specific answer, sending only a message professing his friendly sentiments towards the British. Accordingly the force under Colonel East, consisting of about 4,000 fighting men, together with some troops of the Gaekwar, crossed the Rann at Venasi, about fifty miles east of Anjar, on December 14, 1815. Captain MacMurdo was in charge as political officer: he immediately sent messengers to all the principal *bhayyad* whom he knew to be hostile to the Maharao, as well as to the authorities in Mandvi and Mundra, to explain that the British contemplated no interference with the internal affairs of Kutch, but were merely anxious to be indemnified for the damage which had been inflicted upon them and their subjects by the Maharao's subjects. The Bombay Government seem to have thought that some of the disturbed condition of Kutch might be due to a feeling that Maharao Bharmal was a usurper, and that Ladobha was the rightful heir: but Captain MacMurdo soon found that this was an entire misconception: there was no objection to Maharao Bharmal and no feeling in favour of Ladobha. Captain MacMurdo's intention was to march on Bhuj and to conclude a satisfactory treaty but while the force was at Bhimasur, three marches from Bhuj and one from Anjar, some retainers of Hussain Miyan in Anjar poisoned the wells on the road to Bhuj. This gave Colonel East a new conception of the kind of hostility which he must expect to encounter and it was decided to take precautions which would safeguard the communications of the striking force with Kathiawad and ensure its supplies. Hussain Miyan was asked



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to allow a garrison to occupy Anjar and Tuna, its port. He refused, whereupon Anjar was compelled to surrender after its walls had been breached by the Company's artillery in a single morning—December 25. This demonstration of the power of the striking force was quickly followed by conciliatory letters to Captain MacMurdo from the Maharao, from Shivraj, and from Mohammed Miyan.

The force then moved towards Bhuj and encamped at Lakhnad, where the Maharao, having no choice, quickly agreed to a treaty of friendship and alliance with the Company. By this he pledged himself to make good all past, and any future, losses caused by the dacoits of Wagad: to forbid his subjects to cross the Rann to molest people on the other side: to suppress piracy, making good any past or future losses caused by pirates: to forgo confiscating property wrecked on the coast and to return it to the lawful owner: to forbid the engagement of Arab mercenaries in Kutch with the exception of his own guard of 400 men—a number not to be exceeded: to forbid any outlaws finding asylum in Kutch: to forbid any foreign, European or American force or agent to stay in or pass through Kutch: to make over to the Company the fort of Anjar, with twenty-four villages and the port of Tuna: to pay over 200,000 koris a year and to receive a representative of the Company at the capital—this representative to listen to no complaints against the Maharao, either from the *bhayyad* or from the Diwan. In return, the Company engaged to cause territory which had been alienated by the treachery of the Maharao's servants to be restored to him: to subdue Wagad to a recognition of the Maharao's authority: to forbid their subjects, along with the subjects of the Peishwa and the Gaekwar, from attacking Kutch across the Rann and to refrain from killing cows and bullocks within the limits of Kutch. This treaty, along with a supplementary deed confirming details of the Anjar cession, was signed at Bhuj in January 1816.

It should be noted that this treaty set Kutch apart from all the other States of western India and brought it into the select



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category—together numbering less than two score out of more than five hundred—of Indian States who were deemed by the British as being sufficiently important to merit being linked to the East India Company by a formal treaty of alliance as contrasted with a mere recognition of their existence by an informal engagement or grant of privileges.

As soon as these arrangements were completed, the Company's force moved eastward into Wagad and by the end of February the whole of that turbulent district had been reduced to good behaviour and to acceptance of the Maharao's authority, including the payment of a yearly assessment on each plough. Mandvi, Mundra, Bhachau, Sisagadh and every other town which had resisted the Durbar submitted; so that Maharao Bharmal, like his predecessors until the time of his father Maharao Rayadhan II, was in theory master of the whole of Kutch except Anjar and its dependencies, where Captain MacMurdo remained with a small British detachment after Colonel East's force had gone back to Kathiawad.

The Amirs of Sind had watched with considerable alarm the process by which Kutch had been brought within the orbit of British influence; and they did their best, by sending an envoy to Bhuj, to persuade the Maharao to substitute an alliance with them for his recently-concluded engagement with the Company. But they had no success: Maharao Bharmal was in no mood to break with the British, who in June 1816 had reduced by nearly half the claim for two million rupees due to them as compensation for the depredations across the Rann and for the losses inflicted by Kutchi pirates. They had, in addition, relinquished the annual payment of 200,000 koris originally secured to them under the treaty. Captain MacMurdo was appointed Resident at Bhuj and Collector of Anjar; and Kutch seemed destined to enter once again upon an era of peaceful prosperity.

Unfortunately, these prospects were illusory. It is customary for British historians to blame Maharao Bharmal for all that went wrong in Kutch between 1816 and 1819. Indeed, no one



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could find excuse for certain of his actions, which must appear to any unprejudiced historian both scandalous and foolish. But there can be little doubt that he was determined to use the position of advantage into which British intervention had placed him to redress the encroachments upon the Durbar's authority which the anarchy of Maharao Rayadhan's reign had permitted. A common accusation made against him in British documents is that he was hostile to the *bhayyad*; but it would probably be more accurate to say that the *bhayyad* were hostile to him. During the time when Jamadar Fateh Mohammed was in power, the influence which he exercised in the name of the Ruler was bitterly resented by the Jadeja nobles, who had always hated the widening of the gulf which had begun to separate even the most powerful of them from the Maharao. This gulf became inevitable, as we have seen in dealing with the reigns of Maharaos Desal and Lakho, as soon as there was need for a regular administrative structure in Kutch. Only the Maharao and his ministers could supply this need; and the feudal relationship between the Maharaos and the Jadeja *bhayyad*, which had sufficed for the requirements of the country during the earlier periods of Jadeja supremacy, had proved quite inadequate for an age in which commercial business interests were already beginning to take on a modern complexion. Maharao Bharmal seems to have realized this, more or less clearly, and he certainly worked consistently to fortify the position of the Throne by resuming the powers which had, in course of time, been taken from the *bhayyad*, but which had been dissipated, during the anarchy of his father's reign, among prominent members of the rival political cliques. The *bhayyad*, on their side, were determined to resume the powers which had been taken from them, and to revert, as thoroughly as they could, to the old position by which the Maharao was little more than the accepted chief and leader of a collection of feudal barons whose powers were almost as great as his own.

The immediate issue of the inevitable tussle which broke out depended upon which side could gain the support of the



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British. It is clear from the contemporary evidence that the Company were quite satisfied with the Treaty of 1816 and had no wish to push their intervention any further. At the same time, Kutch was close to Sind; the Sind Amirs were unfriendly to the British; and Sind, and by consequence Kutch, was linked to the wider aspects of international affairs because the Sind Amirs were, in name at least, tributaries of the Durrani monarchy of Kabul. When the Amirs failed to detach Maharao Bharmal from the British alliance, they complained to their Afghan overlord—whose position they recognized only when it suited their convenience—and the Kabul Government sent a pompously-worded and threatening letter to the Company's Governor-General. A tactful reply was sent from Calcutta, pointing out that Kutch had never at any time formed part of the Afghan possessions and that the British had intervened only to the extent necessary to protect their interests. The Afghan Government shortly found itself attacked by the Sikhs, and dropped the complaint. The episode had a certain influence upon the shaping of events in Kutch because it made the Company realize that Kutch had its own importance in the eyes of the Amirs of Sind, and, possibly, in the eyes of the Kabul Government also. For this reason the Company were more sensitive than they otherwise might have been to what went on inside Kutch, for fear of possible repercussions of the western frontier of India: at the same time Maharao Bharmal, although he had rejected the overtures of the Amirs, had not remained entirely unaffected, in his attitude towards the British, by the allegations of the Amirs' agent that the Company were intending to conquer and annex both Kutch and Sind. Indeed, he began to collect troops to defend himself in case of attack.

A good deal of misunderstanding gradually developed between Maharao Bharmal and Captain MacMurdo. The British Resident seems to have had the welfare of the State sincerely at heart and he was anxious that the Maharao should select trustworthy advisers. He hoped great things from



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Rattansey Jetta, nephew of the famous Sundarji Seth; but no one seemed able to work with Bharmal for very long. The birth of an heir in August 1816 settled the succession, and the Maharao's course ought to have been smooth enough. But he fell into the hands of unworthy favourites; he began to neglect the affairs of the State and he became a victim to drunkenness and sensuality. At the same time he did not relinquish his purpose of asserting his supremacy over the Jadeja *bhayyad*. It seems probable that he could have pursued either a life of pleasure or his fixed purpose: his effort to combine the two proved fatal to him. For while his actions against the Jadeja barons ensured their hostility, the kind of life which he led, and his behaviour to Captain MacMurdo, lost him the support of the Company, upon which his position really depended. He was foolish enough to have his cousin Ladobha—now in no case to harm him, and usually one of his boon companions—brutally murdered and to treat with harshness the widow of the murdered man. This lady was the daughter of a Kathiawad chief, who complained to the Bombay Government about the affair, alleging that his daughter's infant girls had been previously killed according to Jadeja custom, and that her own life was now in danger. The Resident addressed a remonstrance to the Maharao, and, at the same time, affronted Bharmal—probably unwittingly—by asking some of the leading Jadeja chiefs to intercede with him on behalf of the widow. These chiefs were only too happy to be approached by the British authorities, and began to feel that they had little to fear from the Maharao. The situation was delicate but the Maharao might still have surmounted his difficulties if he had been willing to handle the British Resident tactfully. But Bharmal had taken a dislike to MacMurdo: he boasted in his cups that he would turn the British out of Anjar and when MacMurdo, with considerable courage, came to Bhuj to convey in person a friendly warning about the dangers which lay ahead, the Maharao made a point of being helplessly intoxicated whenever the Resident waited upon him.



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The Maharao, it is clear, had become thoroughly impatient with Captain MacMurdo and indeed with the British. This is perhaps understandable: he was young and impulsive and he had a natural dislike of being lectured on his shortcomings. What is less understandable is his failure to see that his best hope of subordinating the Jadeja *bhayyad* to the Throne lay in cultivating the friendship and support of the Resident. The *bhayyad* made no such mistake: they began to petition the Company not only to intervene to defend their position against the Maharao's claims, but also to effect the deposition of the Maharao himself. Maharao Bharmal, on his side, made the crowning blunders of assembling a large body of troops: of scarcely disguising his hostility to the British: and of attacking Adesar at the very moment when the chief of that town was in Anjar, with the Resident, negotiating a settlement of the claims of the Durbar. The Government of India took a very serious view of the Maharao's behaviour, particularly as the Amirs of Sind were making a fresh effort to wean Kutch from British influences. They decided to intervene forcibly in Kutch affairs and to take advantage of the offers of co-operation and help against Maharao Bharmal which had reached them from several of the most important Jadeja *bhayyad*. A British force was assembled at Anjar under the command of Sir William Grant Keir: it was quickly joined by the five principal Jadeja chiefs and by the Minister, Lakshmidas Vallabhji, by Udanji, leading the Raipur Brahmins and by a number of less important nobles. It marched on the capital in March 1819.

Maharao Bharmal had lost the game of winning British favour and the *bhayyad* had won. Even so, he need not necessarily have lost his throne but for the accident of a violent illness, which entirely incapacitated him and allowed the control of affairs to pass into the hands of some foolish favourites who tried to organize resistance to the mixed British and Kutchi force which was now encamped before Bhuj. The Maharao was asked to surrender himself and as he did not do so, the fort of Bhujia was escaladed, but without loss of life on either side.



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He then gave himself up, so ill that he could scarcely speak. He was treated with respect, but was placed under guard and, three days later, he was formally deposed by the Resident on the instructions of the British Government.

The deposition of Maharao Bharmal became the source of some curious misunderstandings between the Jadeja chiefs and the British. The Jadejas had done everything in their power to invoke British intervention because they desired to obtain British protection against the steady diminution of their feudal privileges. As the influence of the Durbar inevitably increased in response to the needs of orderly administration, a clash between the Throne and the baronage became inevitable. In that clash the Jadeja nobility had now won an important victory but they were taken aback when Maharao Bharmal was formally deposed. They had eagerly schemed to deprive him of power but they saw no reason why the administration should not continue to be carried on in his name. Their astonishment was increased when they discovered that the British were looking to them to 'elect' a successor to the Maharao. Such a situation had never arisen before in the entire long history of the Jadeja occupation of Kutch. The Throne had usually descended by primogeniture, or else by the *coup d'etat* of the strongest and most determined prince among the claimants. The successful candidate was then 'recognized' by the homage of the Jadeja nobility but they had never 'elected' him: nor did they claim to do so now. Since the British appeared to attach importance to a procedure which was quite meaningless in Jadeja eyes, the Jadeja nobility politely acquiesced. According to Jadeja custom, there was only one possible successor to Maharao Bharmal when Maharao Bharmal ceased, either by death or by deposition, to be Maharao of Kutch, and that was Maharao Bharmal's infant son, Desal. So the Jadeja nobility 'elected' him. Yet he derived his title not from any 'election', but from his position as his father's son.

Everyone in Kutch seems to have known this, except the British. They, with the ideas of constitutional monarchy taken



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from their own history, quite genuinely believed that the Jadeja nobility had the 'right' to 'elect' a Maharao; and they were inclined to praise 'the disinterestedness and forgiveness of injuries' which the Jadejas had shown in 'electing' Maharao Bharmal's son. They did not realize that according to Kutchi ideas, little Prince Desal became Maharao automatically as soon as his father ceased to rule.

The British had done this because they desired to obtain a British protectorate against the steady diminution of their feudal privileges. As the influence of the Durbar inevitably increased in response to the needs of orderly administration, a claim to the throne and the patronage became inevitable. In fact, the Jadeja nobility had now won an important victory but they were taken back when Maharao Bharmal was formally deposed. They had eagerly schemed to deprive him of power but they saw no reason why the administration should not continue to be carried out in his name. Their astonishment was increased when they discovered that the British were looking to them to 'elect' a successor to the Maharao. Such a position had never arisen before in the entire long history of the Jadeja occupation of Kutch. The British had usually described by appointment, or else by the coup d'état of the strongest and most determined prince among the claimants. The successful candidate was then 'recognized' by the homage of the Jadeja nobility but they had never 'elected' him nor did they claim to do so now. Since the British appeared to attach importance to a procedure which was quite meaningless in Jadeja eyes, the Jadeja nobility politely acquiesced. According to Jadeja custom, there was only one possible successor to Maharao Bharmal when Maharao Bharmal ceased, either by death or by deposition, to be Maharao of Kutch and that was Maharao Bharmal's son, Desal. So the Jadeja nobility elected him, or he derived his title not from any 'election' but from his position as his father's son. Now, this was not a Kutchi custom to have known this, except the British. They, with the idea of constitutional monarchy like



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SOME EFFECTS OF BRITISH INTERVENTION

'AGREEABLY to the desire of the Jhareja Bhayyad the Honourable Company agrees in declaring Bharmuljee to have forfeited all claims to the guddee of Kutch, and he is accordingly solemnly deposed.' So ran the second article of the Treaty of Alliance concluded in October 1819 between the East India Company and 'His Highness Maharaja Mirza Rao Shree Dessuljee', his heirs and successors. Captain MacMurdo represented the Company, while Jadejas Prithirajji, Vijayarajji, Miramanji, Pragji, Pragji Mukaji, Aliaji, Nonghanji, Bhanji and Jaimalji signed on behalf of the Kutch Durbar what must surely be considered one of the most remarkable revolutionary documents to which the Government of a Rajput State ever became a party. For in this Treaty, the 'right' of feudal chiefs to 'elect' their Ruler was explicitly set out: the 'right' of the Jadeja *bhayyad*, like that of the Ruler himself, to be free from all British authority in their domestic concerns was recognized: the British undertook to guarantee by separate deeds the Jadeja *bhayyad* and all the premier nobles (including the Minister) in full enjoyment of their possessions, wholly independently of the authority of the Durbar. So zealous, indeed, were the Company in 'protecting' the rights of the feudal nobles against



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possible encroachment by the Ruler that even the article which bound the Maharao to afford the British what armed assistance he could give in time of need was limited by the proviso that no corresponding obligation should be imposed upon the *bhayyad* contrary to their established customs.

The Company's intervention had thus at a stroke reversed the whole trend of political evolution which, during the preceding two centuries, had been developing in Kutch. This trend had been in the direction of building up, under the central authority of the Maharaos, a type of administration which, with all its limitations, was better suited to the needs of the people than the separate jurisdictions of the feudal barons which it had begun to displace. It was a great misfortune that the Company's first close contacts with Kutch should have taken place during the period when disorder, on a scale never before experienced since the early days of the Jadeja conquest, should have paralysed the embryo central administration which earlier rulers had been carefully creating. The Company found no effective voice to controvert the extreme claims of the feudal baronage, even though these claims were based upon social conditions which had already begun to pass away. The cardinal principle which the Company endeavoured to apply whenever they undertook the responsibility of extending their protection to new territories, was to disturb prescriptive rights as little as possible and since it was the *bhayyad*, not the Maharao, who had gained the Company's ear, it was the *bhayyad's* views which (when allowance is made for British unfamiliarity with Kutchi political ideas) carried the day.

It is interesting in this connection to find how completely the early British writers on Kutch affairs accepted unquestioningly the most extreme claims as to the feudal baronage. In 1818, when Captain MacMurdo was Resident at Anjar, he read a paper on Kutch to the Bombay Literary Society, which is reprinted in Volume II of the Society's *Transactions* (1820). He described the government of the country as a pure aristocracy, in which power 'is vested in a variety of chiefs on their respec-



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tive territories'. These chiefs 'have a head who is entitled rao, to whom they owe the duty of military service, with their relations and followers, when called on'. He goes on to describe how these chiefs are the heads (*tilat*) of their own families, who are scattered as squires and landed proprietors owing military service to their own leaders, not to the 'rao'. Neither the 'rao' nor the chiefs, according to Captain MacMurdo, have any authority over their relatives, or can interfere in any way with the management of their villages, although the author of the paper notes that many landed proprietors had lost their holdings 'during the government of a Mahomedan usurper who died about five years ago'. This is the sole reference in a long and interesting description of Kutchi conditions to Jamadar Fateh Mohammed's consistent endeavour to strengthen the central authority by checking the growth of independent jurisdictions and resuming the land of rebellious vassals. Captain MacMurdo notes that each chief had his fort for defence and that the labouring classes and the merchants are very well treated, and can move from place to place, being everywhere welcomed by the chief, whose livelihood depends upon them. 'The facility with which the ryot or merchant can change from one village to another gives him an importance known under no other description of native government.' It is, indeed, typical of Captain MacMurdo's approach that he should attribute to the feudal baronage's attitude the unique position which merchants and cultivators occupied in the social structure of Kutch. The Kutchi genius for trading overseas, the encouragement given to trade by successive Maharaos, the long-established commercial connections between Kutch and the outside world—all these factors are completely overlooked. Yet in another passage Captain MacMurdo notes that the trade of Mandvi kept more than eight hundred vessels busy; that the annual revenues of that city, including town and port dues, were worth two and a half lakhs of rupees: that there was also a considerable inland trade with Marwar and Mewar and that the inhabitants numbered fifty thousand people. The smaller



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ports of Lakhpatt and Mundra had populations of fifteen thousand and twelve thousand, and revenues of sixty thousand rupees and thirty thousand rupees, respectively. How this vigorous economic life, with the administrative system which it must have entailed, fitted in with the archaic feudal pattern of society which, according to Captain MacMurdo, characterized Kutch in his day, it is difficult to see. It seems clear, indeed, that his description is one-sided, in spite of the amount of curious and detailed information which he has brought together.

The whole tenor of MacMurdo's account shows that in spite of his considerable knowledge of Kutchi conditions, the bulk of his information was derived from the greater and lesser feudal nobility, whose divisions into Rajput and Muslim landholders he sets out in detail. His own experiences with Maharao Bharmal were, as we have seen, unhappy. His remarks upon the Jadejas in general are scathing, particularly in regard to their practice of female infanticide, a topic with which his Bombay audience was no doubt greatly concerned. He went so far as to estimate that at the time when he was speaking, there were 'not sixty (I say sixty purposely to be beyond doubt, although it should be nearer thirty) female Jharejas alive at the moment'. How he arrived at this figure defies conjecture, for his facilities for estimating the number of Rajput ladies of good family living in *purdah* must, to say the least, have been limited. But the horrors which he describes may well have strengthened the existing disposition of the Bombay Government to intervene in Kutch affairs.

A more balanced, and on the whole more perceptive, account of Kutch conditions at this period is available from the journal, written five years later, by the famous James Tod who contrived to see Mandvi and—by riding all night—Bhuj, and to return by sea to Bombay, all in the course of a week or two, in January 1823. He was greatly impressed by the differences between Kutch and the States of Rajputana, particularly Mewar, which he knew so well. He concluded that these differ-

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ences were entirely due to Kutch's insular condition, which had preserved the aristocracy in 'all their ancient independent privileges'. He was told that the nobles succeeded to their fiefs without paying *nazrana* to the Ruler, who was only entitled to demand it from them on the occasions of his own accession, of his own marriage, and of the birth of his son: that no act of the Ruler was independent of 'the great council of chiefs': that no land grant, once made, could ever be resumed. Tod's information, like MacMurdo's, came mainly from sources which had invoked British intervention to maintain these claims, however ill-based. No wonder that he was impressed by 'the singular picture of a prince without any civil jurisdiction of control beyond his own personal domain, and exercising the smallest possible quantity of political power to keep the frame of society together'. But he realized, as Captain MacMurdo had not done, that 'there existed a division of the country which, with proper management, might have broken up the power of the aristocracy and left the authority in the hands of its princes. The Crown domain surpassed that of the whole body, and it engrossed the commercial revenues of several cities and towns.' He might have added that the Crown also enjoyed the right of confiscating wrecks and of levying toll upon vessels entering the Gulf of Kutch or plying in Kutch waters without a pass. With the means this afforded, it could always command the services of a portion of the feudatories. Had Tod visited Kutch a century earlier he would have seen that 'proper management' had indeed 'broken up the power of the aristocracy' in favour of the Durbar. When he came, there was no one to tell him that the troubles which had recently led to British intervention were due to circumstances fortunately almost unprecedented in Kutch history.

With the help of 'the respectable Ruttunji' (Jetta) 'the most sagacious member of the Regency,' James Tod collected a great deal of information in the course of a visit which was numbered in days rather than in weeks. Much of his ingenious historical speculations about Jadeja history and origins has been super-



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seded; but his instinctive liking for, and knowledge of, the Rajput character makes his observations on what he had gathered about recent events very pertinent reading. He, too, was impressed by the wealth of Mandvi, with sometimes more than two hundred sail of vessels together in its roadstead: with its port duties worth more than 100,000 rupees a year: with its dealings in 'all the ports of Arabia and Africa': with its fifty bankers whose branch establishments and correspondents stretched right up to northern India. Tod had a keen eye for economic as well as for political ingredients in a State's make-up. This explains why he had a more just appreciation than other British contemporaries of the economic straits which explained, even though they could not excuse, the practice, current among Jadejas, of infanticide—which he rightly perceived was not confined to female infants. He realized that it was in part a desperate effort to avoid the further partition of landed property among numerous heirs; a process which had already reached a stage at which 'each son's share could be carried on the point of his spear'. In part it was a consequence of the difficulty of finding bridegrooms for Jadeja girls within the narrowly-limited permissible circles to which Kutchi Rajputs had access.

Equally shrewd are his observations upon the effects which the recently-established connection with the Company seemed likely to produce upon Kutch's future. The Kutchi system of government could have held together for some centuries longer, he thought, had Kutch not had as a neighbour 'a State of high civilization, ambition, and ever-progressing power; I mean, of course, the British'. He noted that the *bhayyad* 'preferred surrendering their independence to a foreign power, to seeing it wrested from them by their sovereign' and he saw nothing but the gloomiest consequences of their action in inviting the conclusion of a subsidiary alliance, the upshot of which would be the 'destruction' of Jadeja power. 'I may be permitted to say, that however pure our intentions, yet with a British Resident as chief of the Regency: with the creature of our



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creation, Ruttunji (worthy though he be) as the active agent of our influence: with chiefs who, having sinned beyond forgiveness in laying the Jhareja sceptre at our feet, now look to us alone for protection: it would be marvellous if this State should be the exception to the rule which has marked the past and will mark the future. . . . The time cannot be remote, when the usual catalogue of British ministerialists, judges, collectors, adawlat, etc. will spread over the whole.' In this last prophecy, Tod showed himself over-pessimistic. In point of fact, as we shall see, the heroic efforts of successive Maharaoas not only undid much of the retrogressive effects of the British endorsement of the pretensions of the *bhayyad* but also, in the last resort, maintained Kutch's virtual independence from foreign rule until the time came for the country to be merged into the larger whole of a self-governing India.

At the time when James Tod paid his brief but fruitful visit to Kutch, the two principal events of the year 1819 must still have been fresh in men's minds. The first of these was the Treaty with the British which followed the deposition of Maharao Bharmal. This, in addition to its reversal of the formerly-prevailing allocation of power as between the Durbar and the feudal nobility, brought Kutch firmly within the system of subsidiary alliances through which the Marquis of Hastings, as Governor-General, was at this time consistently fostering the extension of British power over Indian States which had been hitherto independent. In many of its provisions, the Treaty is of standard pattern. The Company provided a British force, for which the Durbar had to pay: they undertook to guarantee the power of the Maharao, his heirs and successors and the integrity of his dominions, against foreign or domestic enemies. They disclaimed any authority over the domestic concerns of the 'Rao or of those of any of the Jhareja Chieftains of the country' adding, with unconscious irony 'that the Rao, his heirs and successors shall be absolute masters of their territory'—a pious hope which the Company themselves were doing their best to make impossible of fulfil-



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ment. In return, the Durbar undertook to enter into no negotiations with any State without the Company's sanction, to refrain from aggression against other States, to submit all disputes with other States to the Company's arbitration, to assist the Company with its forces (subject to the limitation that no extra obligation fell upon the *bhayyad*) when called upon to do so.

In addition to what may be called these 'standard' articles, common to almost every Treaty of Subsidiary Alliance concluded between the Company and the most important Indian States, there were a number of provisos which find no place in other similar treaties, because they deal with conditions peculiar to Kutch. The articles in the Treaty of 1816 dealing with the suppression of piracy, the refusal of asylum to outlaws, and the relinquishing of the right to confiscate property wrecked on the Kutchi coast, were confirmed and supplemented by provisions forbidding the Durbar to keep 'any Arabs, Seedees or other foreign mercenaries' in Kutch, or to entertain any other soldiers, even if natives of Kutch, without the Company's permission. No foreign vessels, American, European or Asiatic, were to be allowed to import into Kutch arms or military stores; the Company themselves undertaking to supply the wants of the Kutch Government in these articles at a fair valuation. Kutchi ports were to be open to all British vessels and British ports were to be open to all vessels of Kutch. There were also the special clauses dealing with the guarantees to the baronage and a condition was slipped in, corresponding to the undertaking at the same time executed for the Maharao and his family, that the practice of infanticide should be abolished.

Last, and by no means the least important of the 'special' articles was that which set up the Council of Regency. For this the only precedent in Kutch history was the ill-fated Bara Bhai formed to carry on the Government when Maharao Rayadhan II fell into his fits of insanity. The *bhayyad* remembered this institution without pleasure and were reluctant to revive anything of like nature. It did not suit them to take any

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serious part in the affairs of state, especially as they found themselves obliged to sit at a council-table side by side with officials whose birth and breeding were inferior to their own. Accordingly, when it became necessary, after the formal deposition of Maharao Bharmal, to make arrangements to carry on the administration during the minority of the child-Maharao Desal II, the attitude of the *bhayyad* proved extremely disappointing to the Company. It was largely because of the representations made by, and the support forthcoming from, the *bhayyad* that the Company had finally taken the plunge of intervening in Kutchi affairs. The Company had been told that the *bhayyad* were the real repositories of power in the State, whose just rights were being infringed by an arbitrary Ruler. As soon as that Ruler had been deposed, and his son 'elected' by the *bhayyad* to succeed him, were not the *bhayyad*, the Company asked, the proper people to carry on the Regency—with the help, no doubt, of experienced officials like the Minister, Lakshmidas, and of men of affairs like Rattansey Jetta and Udarji Hirbhai? Yet, to the dismay of Captain MacMurdo (who, one feels, ought to have understood the attitude of the *bhayyad* more clearly) as well as of his principals, the Bombay Government, the nobles who had joined the British in deposing Maharao Bharmal flatly refused to take the responsibility of ruling the State. Even the two most senior, Vijayarajji of Rohar and Prithvirajji of Naugercha, declined to have anything to do with any Council of Regency unless Captain MacMurdo became its Head. Failing this, the *bhayyad* said, they would all go to their estates and take no part in the administration. With great reluctance (if only because they foresaw pretty clearly the kind of difficulties in which they would be landed when they became involved in the internal affairs of Kutch) the Bombay Government agreed; and the Council of Regency was duly set up, with the British Resident as presiding officer.

While these delicate matters were in the process of being thrashed out between Bhuj and Bombay, Kutch was convulsed



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by the worst earthquake which it had experienced for centuries—the second of the notable events of that remarkable year 1819. On June 16, 1819, the first shock was felt in the evening. Shocks went on all night. There were daily shocks for more than six weeks. The effects were frightful. The Maharao's Palace became temporarily uninhabitable; 7,000 houses and other buildings fell in Bhuj with heavy loss of life, while in Mandvi, Anjar, Lakhpat and several smaller towns many thousands were buried under the ruins. Practically every fortification in Kutch, from the walls of the capital itself to the remotest stronghold of a marauding band, was seriously damaged. The Kanphata monks of Dhinodhar reported that fire issued from their mountain—a statement at which later historians have scoffed. Parts of the Rann were suddenly changed from dry land into salt water: a great bank shut off the Indus waters from Kutch, completing the malicious project of Ghulam Shah Kalora and depriving the Lakhpat area of much of the water on which it had for long relied for cultivation: a depression formed in the western portions of the Rann in which were gathered floods which engulfed the ancient fortress of Sindhri. What steps, if any, were taken to relieve the fearful distress which the earthquake must have occasioned, we do not know. There are no records of riots or of any other disturbances and the Regency Council felt themselves strong enough to return a firm reply to a demand, put forward by the Amirs of Sind, that Lakhpat should be surrendered. The Hyderabad Government seems to have been under the impression that Kutch would be in no condition, after the appalling catastrophe of the earthquake, to resist their demand; but the Agent whom they maintained in Bhuj must have reported to them that the British Resident had the Company behind him, and thus would be best left alone. There was talk in Hyderabad that Kutch ought to be invaded so that the British could be turned out but the idea came to nothing.

The Talpur families of Sind had for some time been highly suspicious of British influence in Kutch and would have pre-



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vented, if they could, both the Treaty of 1816 and the Treaty of 1819. The deposition of Maharao Bharmal no doubt caused a considerable sensation in Hyderabad and the Amirs had little disposition to make things easy for the Regency Government. The conditions then existing in Parkar, which was nominally part of Sind territory, gave the Hyderabad authorities an opportunity of embarrassing Kutch. After the Treaty of 1816, when the Company's forces restored order in Wagad, a number of landholders who had lived by plundering their neighbours retreated across the Rann to Parkar. In that district, as in Viraval close to it, there lived a number of Sodha Rajputs under a chief named Punjaji, who was a noted raider. His band was the more formidable because it included several hundred Kosias, broken remnants of a Muslim tribe who had been expelled from Sind as adherents of the Kalhoras when the Talpur Amirs seized power. Since that time their hand had been against every man except the Sodha chiefs who protected them. Among this collection of freebooters the refugee plunderers from Wagad found themselves very much at home; their local knowledge of the passages across the Rann leading to Wagad, and of the conditions in Wagad itself, proved a valuable asset to raiding parties. In May 1819, only a month after little Maharao Desal had been set upon the *gaddi*, there were two formidable incursions of bandits from Parkar into Wagad. Hundreds of cattle were driven off and loot to the value of some 40,000 rupees was seized. The intimate local knowledge which enabled the raiders to avoid strong places like Bhachau and pounce upon the fattest and least defended villages pointed straight at the fugitive landlords. The Regency thereupon did what the Company had for some time been urging the late Maharao Bharmal to do: it proclaimed an amnesty to the Wagad landholders, who were allowed to return and to reoccupy their holdings on a pledge of good behaviour. A large number of them accepted the offer, binding themselves in future to eschew blood feuds, to submit differences to the arbitration of the Durbar, to co-operate with the authorities



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against raiders and to refuse asylum to fugitive offenders. They undertook also to permit their forts to be destroyed and to build no new ones—an engagement which was to prove of unexpected importance as a guarantee of their future good behaviour when the earthquake brought almost all their strongholds to the ground.

When the Wagad landholders returned, the Parkar banditti were deprived of some skilful guides, but they showed little disposition to cease from raiding. Since they were plainly subjects of the Amirs of Sind, the Company—and the Kutch Durbar—held the Hyderabad Government responsible and addressed successive complaints, each one stronger than the last, to Sind. The Amirs were not ready to quarrel seriously with the British, but at the same time were not disposed to take really effective measures to restore order in Parkar. During 1819, two expeditions were indeed sent to that area from Hyderabad. They merely plundered the country and levied a fine on the chiefs—thereby, in fact, providing an incentive for further raiding across the Rann into Kutchi territory to make good losses suffered. At the end of the year, a Kosia band made an inroad into the Banni, and carried off a good many cattle. Some beasts were recaptured, but the raiders made their escape. The Company and the Kutch Durbar then complained again to the Amirs of Sind, who incautiously agreed that the banditti might be attacked in their own haunts. Accordingly, in the beginning of 1820, a considerable force of British and auxiliary troops assembled in Gujarat, ready to advance into Parkar. The Amirs became alarmed, in spite of assurances that no action against Sind was contemplated, and their alarm was increased by an unfortunate occurrence. A party of Baluchi troops under a Sindhi officer had admitted some Kosias into their camp. A British outpost, thinking that the camp was inhabited only by Kosias, attacked it. In great wrath, the Hyderabad Government despatched three armies, directed towards the east, centre and west of Kutch and one of these plundered a village near Lakhpat before beating a retreat. But



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the operation was not intended to be more than a demonstration of annoyance; and shortly afterwards the Hyderabad Government concluded a treaty with the British, pledging itself to restrain the Kosias. Unfortunately the agreement remained a dead letter: raiding continued for another decade until the British, with the consent of the Hyderabad Government, stationed a detachment permanently in Parkar to maintain law and order.

This raiding from Parkar was a highly-organized business, and a sharp thorn in the side of the Regency Government. While it continued, Wagad could not be rescued from its backward condition. People had to cultivate their fields armed to the teeth and all incentive to prosperity was lacking when every flourishing village became a target for freebooters. Worse still, the Parkar banditti found influential protectors in Kutch, with whom they shared their booty; and one or two of the most notorious raiders were actually Kutchis. One of these, Tahar Lunai by name, was patronized by Jadeja Vijayarajji of Rohar, who stood surety for him when he came under suspicion. Tahar Lunai then absconded, and in the middle of 1823 returned to Kutch at the head of a formidable band of plunderers, some 3,000 strong, which seized Habai. They were soon dislodged; but before they retreated across the Rann, they had done a great deal of damage and put the Regency Government to heavy expense. But there were indications that something more serious was on foot. The Company's Agent in Hyderabad intercepted correspondence which proved that the Rohar Chief and two other of the *bhayyad* were in correspondence with the Amirs of Sind as well as being in league with the Parkar banditti and were asking the Hyderabad Government to invade Kutch. But that Government, whose intelligence seems to have been accurate, decided that there would be insufficient support forthcoming from the *bhayyad* as a whole, if Sind invaded Kutch—quite apart from which there was a considerable risk in openly challenging the Company. In consequence, Hyderabad took no action; and soon afterwards, as a



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mark of confidence, Dr Burnes, then Residency Surgeon at Bhuj, was invited to treat one of the Amirs for illness. Dr Burnes wrote a graphic account of his experiences in Hyderabad, which he published, along with a useful *Sketch of the History of Cutch*, in 1831. The only positive result of the correspondence with the Sind Court was that the two Jadeja *bharryad* implicated lost their seats on the Regency Council of Kutch.

It is a remarkable tribute to the general moderation with which Captain MacMurdo and his successors in the Residency exercised their authority in their early days that the invitation to the Hyderabad Government seems to be the only recorded attempt to upset the Treaty of 1819. In that year there had indeed been an effort by Princess Kesar Bai, who idolized Maharao Bharmal, to release him from confinement by seizing his person from the *bharryad* guards responsible for his safe custody but this conspiracy was so obviously prompted by sisterly affection and had so little bearing upon the stability of the new regime, that no one took it very seriously. It had no result except that the Princess, who had until then refused all offers of marriage, was induced, shortly afterwards, to bestow her hand in an alliance which for some time removed her from the affairs of Kutch. On the whole, the new regime settled down quietly. Although the main responsibility fell upon Captain MacMurdo, Lakshmidas proved himself a very competent man of business and by degrees the chaos which had characterized of late the main departments of the Government was replaced by order and efficiency. The days of the great Jamadars—Fateh Mohammed, Dosal Vani, Mohammed Miyan, and their like—passed away for ever, as the superiority of the civilian over the soldier in policy-making became firmly established. The Arab and Sidi Palace troops, who had been a source of great expense, were dismissed and their place was taken by Jadeja troops furnished by the *bharryad*. At the same time, detachments of the best Kutchi soldiers in the service of the Durbar were posted to different parts of the State on police and



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public security duties. They contributed much to the restoration of order everywhere except in Wagad, where, in consequence of the continual raiding from Parkar which has already been mentioned, special arrangements were necessary. A contingent of the Poona Irregular Horse was stationed in that district for some time and, later, the Assistant Resident (or Assistant Political Agent, as he became) was put in charge of the area, with a special police force under his command. The process of putting down disorders and lifting the State out of the confusion into which it had fallen was steadily and successfully pursued by Captain MacMurdo. Unfortunately, he died in 1819, soon after the final Treaty was concluded, at Baranwar, in Wagad, where his tomb was for long venerated and even visited by pilgrims from a distance. His work was taken up and continued by his successors, Mr Charles Norris and Mr Gardiner.

These efforts were, however, greatly hampered by the independent position of the *bhayyad*, for the confirmation of which, in an exaggerated degree, the British were themselves responsible. Before long, as the *Bombay Gazetteer* (1880) frankly admitted, the mistake became obvious. 'The result of the treaty' (of 1819) 'was that the utmost advantages to British interference were secured to the Jhareja Chiefs, while the burdens inseparable therefrom were heaped upon the Rao, then a minor of two or three years.' Mountstuart Elphinstone, then Governor of Bombay, who visited Kutch in January 1821 noted: 'The Rao's ordinary jurisdiction is confined to his own demesne, each Jadeja Chief exercising unlimited authority within his own lands. The Rao can call upon the Jadejas to serve him in war, but must furnish them with a fixed rate of pay while they are with his army. He is the guardian of the public peace and as such chastises all robbers and other general enemies. It would seem likewise that he ought to repress private war and decide all disputes between chiefs: this prerogative, though constantly exerted, is not admitted without dispute.' Elphinstone, like James Tod who, as we have seen,

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came two years afterwards, was so impressed by the independence of the *bhayyad* that he failed to realize that there could be another side to the picture and that the Rulers of Kutch, over several centuries, had built up a position of supremacy which had only recently been lost. So careful was Elphinstone to ensure that the British guarantees to the *bhayyad* were fully honoured that he laid it down as part of the Resident's duties to ensure that there should be no encroachment upon the privileges of the Jadeja chiefs. The Resident, he ordered, should restrain the Regency from forfeiting a chief's possessions even after his recalcitrance had necessitated the employment of military force against him. The essential unreality of Elphinstone's approach, which may be taken as typical of the British view at this time, is shown by his solemn conclusion that 'I do not think there is any necessity for referring political questions to the decision' of the *bhayyad* and that they should all be assembled 'to give their votes' on important matters. 'I should think fifty or sixty is the greatest number that need ever be consulted.'

How little these highfalutin ideas corresponded to the realities of the situation can be seen from the evidence of the Assistant Resident, Charles Walter. Writing in 1827-28 he remarked 'from the Jhareja Chiefs who are members of the Regency, no assistance has ever been derived. Considering the attainments of the commonest qualifications as beneath their dignity as Rajputs, they are as little adapted, from their ignorance, as it is as foreign to their habits, to interfere or to advise in the affairs of the Rao.' The truth was, as successive Residents found, that there was no such thing as a constitutional monarchy in Kutch and that the Jadeja nobles were quite incapable of operating such a system, even if it had not been entirely foreign to all their ideas. As this gradually became clear and as the needs of the State were better understood, a series of checks were quietly imposed upon the extreme independence of the *bhayyad*. Powers likely to interfere with the maintenance of public order, or with the policy of a good and strong



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government, were gradually taken out of their hands. For example, they were forbidden to inflict capital punishment and they were penalized if they ventured to disobey a direct order from Regency. During the time when Colonel (afterwards Sir Harry) Pottinger was the British Resident (1827-1834) this policy was steadily pursued. That experience of actual conditions had caused the Bombay Government gradually to change their ideas is plain from the minute which Sir John Malcolm wrote in 1830 when, as Governor of Bombay, he paid a visit to Kutch: 'The chiefs of Kutch have encroached upon their ruler till his revenue bears no just proportion to his condition as their head. It should be a principle of our policy to take every fair advantage of events, to increase his power to the diminution of the depraved, disobedient, and unmanageable class of petty chiefs, whose existence in their actual state is at variance with all plans of improvement and calculated to render unprofitable, if not to destroy, the alliance we have formed with this principality.' The Governor of Bombay took advantage of this visit to assemble the Jadeja chiefs and to rebuke them soundly for their bad behaviour. 'I find,' he said, 'that a large body of Rajput chiefs, boasting of the name of Jadejas and of devoted allegiance to their ruler, considering themselves sheltered by our too generous guarantee from the just resentment of their Prince, made not one effort to protect his towns from plunder or his fields from devastation. . . . Let it be known in the future that there is nothing in the British guarantee that frees the chiefs from their allegiance or from the aid that they are bound to give to their Prince.'

What effect this warning had upon those to whom it was addressed is unknown. The *bhayyad* as a whole were content to remain on their estates, to mind their own business and to take no part in Durbar affairs. But since they had now, as they thought, nothing to fear from the Durbar, they were quite ready to display solicitude for the rights and dignity of the Ruler; and they took the opportunity afforded by Sir John Malcolm's visit to ask that ex-Maharao Bharmal's guard



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should be removed; that Maharao Desal, now fourteen years old, should be associated in the management of public affairs and that the tribute from Kutch to the British should be reduced. The first request was granted: ex-Maharao Bharmal thenceforth lived peacefully in his son's house, without intervening in politics, until his death in 1846. Nor did the Governor object to Maharao Desal, who had been well and carefully educated, and showed signs of marked character and intelligence, being initiated gradually into the business of ruling. The third request was refused but, in fact, circumstances were contriving to make some relief inevitable.

The position guaranteed to the *bhayyad* meant, in hard fact, that about half the cultivated land paid no dues to the State at all. Out of some 850 villages, only 294 belonged to the Durbar, while 434 were in the hands of the Chiefs and 123 were alienated for religious and charitable purposes. The Durbar had control of sea customs and other port dues: otherwise it could tax only its own villages. Between 1819-20 and 1831-32—the first series of years for which formal accounts of receipts and expenditure are available on the lines of a modern Budget—the Durbar receipts averaged about Rs.700,000, while disbursements exceeded receipts in all but four of these thirteen years, sometimes by as much as Rs.80,000. Among the heaviest of the obligations were those due to the British under the various Treaties. On a just perspective, it would appear that the real trouble lay with the poverty of the Durbar rather than with any rapacity on the part of the British. In 1816 the Company had remitted the yearly tribute of 200,000 koris which Maharao Bharmal had promised to pay, and had also relieved him of the expenses of the military expedition, amounting to more than Rs.800,000, for which he had become liable under the 1816 Treaty. But the Treaty of 1819 saddled Kutch with the expenses of the Subsidiary Force which the Company stationed in and around Bhujia Fort. It became obvious before long that the State was financially incapable of meeting the whole bill: Captain MacMurdo insisted that Rs.200,000 was the maximum



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which could be expected. But even this sum, when debited to the State from 1819 onwards (and it could not be paid because there was no money—Captain MacMurdo was obliged to farm out the revenue for the five years 1819–24 in order to obtain resources just to carry on the Government) soon began to accumulate formidable arrears.

In 1822 there had been another financial complication. When the British Resident became head of the Regency administration, his work, except for such touring as was necessary, lay almost entirely in Bhuj. His previous headquarters, Anjar, was too far away to be serviceable, with the result that his office, his guards, and his clerical establishment were transferred to the capital. There seemed no further justification for retaining possession of the city and district of Anjar, which had been made over to the British under the Treaty of 1816. As the Durbar was naturally anxious to get them back, a Treaty was concluded in 1822 by which the Company returned Anjar and its dependencies to Kutch in consideration of an annual payment of Rs.88,000. The Durbar was also anxious to get back to Bhujia Fort, in and around which the Subsidiary Force was settled. In the same Treaty the Company agreed to move the troops elsewhere, if a suitable site to the north of their present location were made available. In fact, this could not be arranged, and British troops remained in occupation of the Fort until they were finally withdrawn a century later. These troops were usually at Brigade strength, but from time to time they were increased, particularly if trouble threatened from the side of Sind, as happened in 1824–25, when it was considered expedient to bring the strength up to 6,000 men of all arms. Since it would have been quite unfair to saddle the Durbar with this kind of additional expense, the Company felt that no matter what increase occurred in the Subsidiary Force, the Durbar's payment ought to be limited to Rs.200,000. But what was to happen if at some future time the Subsidiary Force came to be diminished, or even withdrawn altogether?

A financial adjustment became all the more urgent because



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Kutch proved quite unable to pay the combined obligation of Rs.200,000 for the Subsidiary Force and Rs.88,000 for the return of Anjar. By 1882, the arrears had mounted to Rs.257,255—which was between one-third and one-half of the entire revenue of the Durbar for an average year. Accordingly, in that year a fresh Treaty was concluded which wiped off all the arrears which the Durbar owed, limited the payment for the Subsidiary Force to Rs.200,000 and suspended entirely the payment of the 'Anjar Equivalent' so long as the Subsidiary Force's expenses remained at or about the figure of the Durbar's contribution. But if the expenses of the Force ceased, or were so far reduced that they fell below Rs.88,000, Durbar undertook again to pay the 'Anjar Equivalent in perpetuity'. With the exception of the last proviso, which was ungenerous, the new arrangement met the Durbar's financial difficulties very fairly.

From the notes made by Captain (later Sir Alexander) Burnes covering the five years 1824–28, it is clear that Kutch was settling down pretty well under the Regency administration. The foreign trade by sea continued to be important and the restoration of order had favoured the growth of a considerable pack traffic from Kutch, and particularly from the Abdasa, to Marwar and Gujarat. One of the striking features of the economy of the State at this time was the flourishing condition of the pastoralists as contrasted with the cultivators. On the grazing lands to the north of Kutch, and on the Rann islands, large herds of cows, buffaloes, camels and flocks of sheep and goats were maintained. A strong and hardy population, neither growing nor eating grain, but living mostly on milk, exported enough butter and *ghi* to keep themselves in clothes, tobacco, opium and other necessities. Burnes found that between 120 and 160 pounds of butter were sent away every day from the Banni alone; while from Gadhada on Khadir island the annual exports amounted to 32,000 pounds. The lot of the cultivators was not so good. In bad seasons whole villages would move away to Sind: while conditions in



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some of the Jadeja holdings, where the writ of the Durbar did not at that time run, were still disturbed enough to discourage crop raising. Wagad was thinly peopled and poorly tilled and the damage done by the raiding from Parkar was bad enough to cause land to go out of cultivation. Half the district, according to Burnes, was waste: lions, tigers, panthers, wolves, hyenas and other dangerous animals had so increased that few villagers dared to be outside their homes after sunset. Abdasa, however, was much better: cotton, castor-oil and tobacco yielded heavy crops. Over Kutch in general, cash-crops rather than food crops prevailed: a great deal of food was imported, particularly coarse red rice from Sind and dates from Arabia. In good years the total population was upwards of half-a-million: when the season was bad, numbers were accustomed to migrate, particularly to Sind, until things got better.

In spite of all the difficulties, economic and political, to which the system of formally divided authority, introduced by the British, was giving rise, an orderly administration had been built up by the Council of Regency. The main responsibility was borne by the Head, the British Resident, but most of the work was done by the Minister, Diwan Lakshmidas, and by Seth Rattansey Jetta. The Jadeja members, as we have noticed, did little or nothing and after Vijayarajji of Rohar had been detected in complicity with the Parkar raiders and expelled from the Council, no *bhayyad* member of any importance emerged. The standards of integrity exacted by the Residents were very high and in 1827 Rattansey himself was held to be involved in some discreditable transactions, which caused the British to lose faith in the whole family of Sundarji Seth. Diwan Lakshmidas, however, contrived to satisfy the British without losing the confidence of his own countrymen. The arrangements made in the Treaty of 1832 promised to set the financial relations between the Durbar and the British upon a footing which would enable the administration to plan ahead with some confidence.

At that time Maharao Desal had reached his seventeenth year.



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His education had from the first been carefully planned, under the supervision of Mr Gray, Chaplain to the Forces at Bhuj, and a friend of Robert Burns. After Mr Gray's death the young Prince's education was continued under the guidance of Captain Crofton, a King's Service officer who proved an excellent choice. Thus when Maharao Desal began to take a real interest in public affairs he was well equipped to understand them. In addition to the normal education which might be expected from a lad who was the heir to the *gaddi*, he could read and write English; he could understand English as well as Kutchi arithmetic and accounts; and he had a good working knowledge of astronomy as well as of geography in the European meaning of these subjects. In 1833, according to the arrangements sanctioned by Sir John Malcolm in 1830, the young Maharao commenced systematic work upon affairs of State. He prudently sought the advice of the Resident about any point that puzzled him, and British observers noted that he went to and fro between the Palace and the Residency many times each day. Colonel Pottinger, the Resident at the time, not only liked the young Maharao very much, but formed a high opinion of his natural capacity and of his entire competence to conduct public affairs. As a result, it was arranged that the Regency should be wound up and the Maharao should be put in charge of the administration in July 1834 instead of waiting until he became twenty years old in August 1835—as the Treaty of 1819 had contemplated. Accordingly a new Treaty was concluded on July 5, 1834, by which the Regency was terminated and the Maharao was 'placed in charge of the government of his country under the constitutional and established advice of his ministers and the members of the *Jadeja bhayyad*'. This document was signed on behalf of the Company by Colonel Pottinger and on behalf of Kutch by ten of the *bhayyad*, headed by Khengarji of Rohar and Chanderji of Naugercha. It is thus clear that in spite of the centralizing policy lately pursued by successive Residents, the British theory that Kutch was a kind of constitutional monarchy, re-



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gardless of the complete conflict with all the ancient usages of the State, still officially held the field. The irony of the situation lay in the fact that, as the experience of the last fifteen years had shown only too clearly, the *bhayyad* were not only unfitted, but also entirely unwilling, to play the kind of active part in the management of public affairs which could alone have justified the wholly artificial importance to which the British had elevated them. The young Maharao, of course, realized the position only too clearly: it became his prime objective—an objective which he passed down to his successors—to restore the authority of the Durbar by gradually making good the encroachments which it had suffered at the hands of the *bhayyad* and of their supporters, the Company.

The young Maharao was a man of great good sense, who fully appreciated the impossibility of openly fighting the existing alliance between the Company and the *bhayyad*. He set himself to win the goodwill of both. He moved with caution, and was content to allow the practical inconvenience attending the division of the State into two halves, one subject to himself, and the other subject to the *bhayyad*, to work on his behalf. In this steady process he was greatly helped by his own keen appreciation of the part which the British could play in helping to build up the prosperity of Kutch and of the consequent necessity of co-operating closely with them. His education, without divorcing him from his own people, enabled him to understand many of the ideas which underlay British policy: he thus found it a comparatively simple matter not only to work harmoniously with the representatives of the Company but also to sympathize actively with the humanitarian ideas which the British were endeavouring to apply to all those parts of India where their influence was sufficiently established. One example of this was the question of slavery. In the old days, Mandvi had been a considerable centre of the trade in Abyssinian and other negro slaves, for which there had formerly been a good market in many parts of India. During the time of the Regency, while British Residents had been at the head



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of the administration, the trade had been frowned upon. When James Tod visited Mandvi in 1823, he found merchants, who had been accustomed to keep slaves, lamenting the changed conditions. He was told that the slaves 'are not fit for us any longer, for when we tell them to work, they reply they will when they please and if for this we punish them, they run away. Before, when the Rao's government was supreme, they were reclaimed but now your [i.e. British] power is here also.' Tod noted, however, how different the Sidis were now that they were free men. 'I never saw merrier or more nimble and well-knit fellows than the Sidi sailors, whether the crews of the ships on the roads, or those belonging to the ports.' In spite of all the British could do, however, a certain amount of clandestine slave-trading survived. But two years after Maharao Desal assumed ruling powers, he published a stern order, proclaiming the confiscation of every vessel which should bring slaves to Kutch, and the punishment of those who navigated it. This finally crushed slavery in Kutch, to the great satisfaction of the British, who gave the Maharao every credit for his enlightened action and urged his abolition of slavery, as an example to be followed, upon all the Kathiawad Princes of the Jadeja clan who looked up to the Maharao of Kutch as their senior Ruler.

Maharao Desal also interested himself in another matter which was very dear to contemporary British ideas—the abolition of infanticide. In 1819, promises had been taken from the Jadeja *bhayyad*, as a condition of their receiving their guarantees, to abolish the custom. But it was deeply rooted in prevailing economic and social conditions and these promises seem to have been little observed. The Maharao himself thoroughly disapproved of the practice and almost his first act after he attained ruling powers was to demand a fresh written promise from all the guarantee-holders, repeating their undertaking to abolish the practice and admitting their liability to punishment if they permitted it. The Bombay Government soon came to realize that only the Maharao himself could



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carry through the reform to which they attached so much importance: while at the same time his entire lack of authority over the territories held by the Jadeja *bhayyad* was a serious handicap to his efforts.

The British soon became convinced of the Maharao's complete sincerity in the matter by the frank counsel which he gave from time to time to the Kathiawad Princes of the Jadeja clan who not infrequently sought his advice about the abolition of infanticide; and about the propriety of giving their daughters in marriage to families of the same rank as those from which they sought brides for their sons—with the object of enlarging the rather slender marriage-prospects which caused many girls born to Rajput parents to be killed in infancy. In every case Maharao Desal by his advice showed himself a strong supporter of reform and he set an example in the marriage-alliances of his own family which was at once courageous and enlightened. One result of this was that the British strongly supported the Maharao's efforts to induce the *bhayyad* to adopt similar practices and they stood behind him when he obtained a new undertaking from the *bhayyad* in 1840 requiring an accurate census of the sons and daughters born every year to be rendered to the Durbar; authorizing Durbar officers to go round *bhayyad* villages for the purpose of inspection, and arranging for all fines exacted for a breach of the undertaking to be used to set up a fund for the dowries of poor Jadeja girls. As time went on and the Maharao persevered, stricter and stricter rules were drawn up and enforced. The process had a two-fold effect. In the first place, the practice of infanticide by degrees fell into desuetude, so that by 1873 the survival of girl babies among Jadeja families was taken as a matter of course. In the next place the old supervision which former Maharaos had, until the British upset the system, always exercised throughout Kutch, even inside *bhayyad* territory, was gradually reintroduced in almost imperceptible fashion.

Perhaps the most striking testimony to the great influence which Maharao Desal exercised over every class of his subjects



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is provided by his success in securing the abolition of *sati*. This practice has a respectable antiquity: even to-day, in independent India, popular sentiment inclines to regard a widow who sacrifices herself after her husband's death as a model wife and a paragon of virtue. It was very common in Kutch, as in many other Rajput States: Mrs Postans, who visited Kutch in 1837, has left a full account of it, mentioning how firmly it was established and how difficult it was to deter women from sacrificing themselves. Even the Maharao felt (he was only twenty-two at the time) that he had no power to interfere. The Maharao hesitated long before committing himself to a course of action which he knew to be contrary to the opinion of the great majority of people in Kutch; but at length he made up his mind, and persuaded the *bhayyad* to support him in prohibiting *sati*. He wrote firmly to the British Political Agent (Kutch no longer had a Resident of its own) in February 1853 about the difficulties which he was encountering and ended by saying: 'Notwithstanding the prohibition and my efforts to see it enforced, it is possible that some ignorant person may, from misunderstanding, still perform the rite. Government must not hold me responsible for any such acts, for it is a hard matter to put a stop suddenly to the wish of great numbers, or for a people to depart from their religion.' Yet notwithstanding this prudent disclaimer, the Maharao's prestige and the great affection in which he was held overcame the scruples of the orthodox. There were very few violations of the decree and those who offended against it were called to strict account.

Maharao Desal, by his prudence in administration, his devotion to duty, and his knowledge of the way in which the minds of the British worked, had succeeded in building up for himself a very great position. But he was handicapped in his efforts to regain the authority which the *gaddi* of Kutch had enjoyed before his father's time because of the fatal British guarantee to the *bhayyad*. This had fortified them in an almost impregnable position against any increase in the power of the central Government, although such increase was wholly



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essential if the administration was to measure up to the needs of an age in which the primitive feudalism of an early day had become wholly outmoded. Among the difficulties which arose through British 'recognition' of the independence of the *bhayyad* was the anomalous position of the Adhoi enclave in Wagad. This enclave had come into the possession of the Prince of Morvi in the time of Rao Pragmal; but it seems to have been treated like any other piece of *bhayyad* territory for a considerable period: that is to say, Kutch Durbar authority was broadly recognized, if not always enforced. But after the British guarantees of 1819 Adhoi naturally shared the 'independence' conferred on Rohar and other Jadeja estates; and the fact that the Thakor Sahib of Morvi had been taken under British protection in 1807 made the status of the enclave in relation to the Kutch Durbar even more obscure. Maharao Desal tried his best to restore the old position: Morvi resisted his claims. In 1842, a commission was appointed by the British under the chairmanship of Mr Lumsden, which decided that the Adhoi enclave ought to be considered an island of Morvi territory in the middle of Kutch, and that the Kutch Durbar had no rights in it at all. This report laid the foundations of a bitter dispute between Kutch and Morvi which lasted, with varying fortunes, for a hundred years. It became complicated by questions relating to riparian rights, customs rights, and maritime rights in Kathiawad as well as in Kutch, which far exceeded in importance the issues in the original territorial disagreement.

The shadow of the dispute with Morvi was to fall mainly in the future, although Maharao Desal, disappointed with the finding of the Commission, did not fail to protest against it. Of greater immediate importance were Mr Lumsden's decisions relating to the Maharao's rights over the *bhayyad*. These were declared to be the right to summon the *bhayyad* for military service (subject to providing subsistence), the right to settle appeals from the *bhayyad* in their disputes with each other, the right to recover stolen property or its value from any member



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of the *bhayyad* to whose town it had been traced, the right to collect cesses from certain *bhayyad* villages, the right to enforce legitimate orders by force of arms or by billeting messengers on the recalcitrants, the right to assign payment of certain religious grants to Jadeja estates and the right to control sea customs, port dues, and other incidents arising from his maritime sovereignty. But the Maharao's claim to levy a tax upon the *bhayyad* for public works was disallowed; Mr Lumsden considered it doubtful whether the Durbar was entitled to place police posts in Jadeja towns. Even so, a comparison with Mr Lumsden's findings with the views of Captain MacMurdo and James Tod twenty years earlier shows how much ground the Maharao's careful policy had regained. It is to be noticed that in 1843, when Mr Lumsden had become Political Agent, he recorded the fact that the 'partition of jurisdiction' between the Maharao and the *bhayyad* 'would speedily lead to anarchy' unless modified by circumstances.

There was thus a steady, if slow, turning of the tide in the Maharao's favour and it may be this fact which encouraged him, in 1849, to lodge a formal protest against the article in the 1834 Treaty which declared that he was to rule under the constitutional and established advice of his ministers and the Jadeja *bhayyad*. He stated, with complete accuracy, that he was on such good terms with the *bhayyad* that his approach was not caused by the pressure of any personal difficulties; but he pointed out that the general government of Kutch had always been carried on by the Ruler's personal authority. He was quite ready, he said, to act with the advice of the *bhayyad* in all matters in which the British guarantee was involved; but he urged that all other matters should be conducted in accordance with the ancient usages of Kutch. The Company refused to alter the Treaty, on the somewhat disingenuous ground that their own interests, and those of the Maharao, were not the only ones concerned.

The Maharao was no doubt disappointed, but he continued his quiet, steady policy of asserting his authority whenever



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opportunity offered. In spite of his great popularity, some of the *bhayyad* became alarmed at the increasing power of the *gaddi*. There were disputes between them and the Durbar. As was the rule, these disputes came before the Political Agent, who asked for the ruling of the Bombay Government on whether he was under any obligation to check the Maharao's systematic acquisition of claims to *bhayyad* property by purchase and mortgage: to interfere with his promulgation of laws applicable to *bhayyad* territory as well as to his own or to prevent his billeting messengers upon the vassals of the *bhayyad* in certain circumstances. Moreover, could the *bhayyad* enforce the power of advice which was secured to them in the Treaty of 1834? On these points the Political Agent advised in a direction adverse to the Maharao's interests; and he was supported by the Bombay Government; although a little later, the Maharao won the point about billeting.

Maharao Desal's struggle against the limitations which British intervention in Kutch affairs had imposed upon the growth of the authority of the Durbar has been described at some length because it illustrates the position of virtual impotence to which the system of Subsidiary Alliances could reduce even a ruler whose friendship to the Company was unquestioned, whose ideas were eminently enlightened and whose private life and conduct of public affairs were admittedly unexceptionable. The guarantees which had been given to the *bhayyad* in 1819: the attempt to create a constitutional monarchy by dividing power between the *gaddi* and a Jadeja nobility who were as unqualified to take part in the administration as they were uninterested in so doing, were serious mistakes which sprang entirely from the British. They deflected the course which Kutch history had taken until the natural process of administrative evolution became interrupted by the madness of Maharao Rayadhan and the recklessness of Maharao Bharmal. The fact that these mistakes were made honestly, and, indeed, with the motives of ensuring the best interests of the Kutchi



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people, did not prevent them from seriously handicapping the efforts of Maharao Desal—one of the best and ablest Rulers who ever occupied the *gaddi* of Kutch—to restore the former prosperity of the land. Had he not suffered from the disadvantage of having almost half the State removed from his jurisdiction, his achievements would have been even more notable than they were.

Quite early on in his reign Mrs Postan's lively pen—and even more graphic brush—depicted the young Maharao in a way which brings him vividly to life. This lady, whose curiosity was insatiable where any aspect of Kutchi life was concerned, pays a handsome compliment to Maharao Desal's intelligence, amiability and devotion to duty. Although she was not a trained observer, and imported into many of her descriptions of people and things in Kutch an attitude of amused superiority which would be justly criticized in a modern traveller, her little book entitled *Cutch; or Random Sketches of Western India*, published in London in 1838, well deserves a place of its own in the scanty literature which deals with the part of India in which she spent several years. Her accounts of the history and legends of Kutch are uncritical, and have long been superseded, but she can describe with considerable accuracy the things which came under her own notice. She remarks upon Maharao Desal's fondness for horses and the care which he took to encourage the Kutchi breed. She describes the accoutrements of the Durbar horsemen—some six hundred of them, many being Syeds—whom the Maharao maintained as well as the equipment of the few Arab foot soldiers in his service. She visited the Queen Mother and the Maharanis 'behind the curtain': she was impressed by the excellence of Kutch's ancient architecture and modern craftsmanship. But it would be difficult to gather, from her fluent, if rather superficial, impressions that Kutch had changed at all in the generation preceding her story, or, indeed that it would change at all in the future.

In fact, the changes which the young Maharao, whose



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personality she found so engaging, succeeded in effecting before he died, deeply regretted, in 1860, were remarkable. He had gone far to re-establish the authority of the *gaddi*. Lieutenant Raikes, Assistant Political Agent, writing in 1854, recorded that Maharao Desal conducted practically all the business of the country himself. Without his order, not even a horseman was despatched from the stables. He worked through two committees, each composed of a few members of the *bhayyad* together with his own paid officers, in order to avoid disturbing the arrangements made by the British. In fact he was the best-informed man in the State, and his influence was enormous. One of the committees dealt with disputes and the other with the conduct of general affairs. The Maharao himself looked after all the business with the Agency, whose staff he took care to consult on the majority of important matters. He made a great impression upon the British officers who worked with him because of his frankness, his high regard for truth and his love of fair dealing. His management of financial affairs was prudent. The average revenue of the Durbar was about Rs.700,000; the expenditure about Rs.618,000, including the payment towards the expenses of the British Subsidiary Force. The most important revenue items were land taxes (Rs.200,000), sea customs and transit dues (Rs.200,000), and town duties, nazranah, sale of animals, etc. (Rs.316,000). The payment to the British was the heaviest item on the expenditure side, closely followed by the cost of the revenue establishment, the police and other purely administrative charges. The entire Budget is a very modest one; as might be expected from the fact that the Jadeja *bhayyad* engrossed a total income of Rs.446,000—which bore no share at all of State charges. The independence of the *bhayyad* had the further disadvantage that some 166,000 people, who were their tenants, (like the 30,000 people living in villages alienated for religious and charitable purposes), paid no Durbar taxes except such as came indirectly from customs duties: the whole burden was borne by the 213,000 people who lived on Crown lands. Moreover, when



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the Maharao, to encourage trade, lowered both the customs duties and the internal transit duties which he controlled, his efforts were largely offset by the refusal of the *bhayyad* to lower the transit duties which they levied on goods passing through their own possessions.

The long reign of Maharao Desal, which did so much for the people of Kutch, was a period of great internal tranquility. In spite of the fact that so large a share of the criminal and civil jurisdiction had been taken away from the Durbar by the rights which the Treaty of 1819 had conferred upon the *bhayyad*, the institution of an efficient Durbar Police resulted in an absence of crime and in a security both of person and of prosperity, which were not surpassed, according to British observers, in any part of India. The general sense of unity among Kutchi people, their attachment to their Ruler, and the isolated position of the State, kept them free from many of the troubles from which other places suffered. There were no Hindu-Muslim riots; there were no disturbances of other kinds. The grim year 1857 left Kutch tranquil and unmoved, happy in the feeling that its Ruler and its traditional institutions were safe from the violence of the storm which raged in less fortunate areas. The Political Agent and his wife, feeling themselves isolated from others of their nationality, were invited to stay with the Maharao as his guests until the dark days were over. But in Kutch, nothing disturbed the peace; Maharao Desal was loved and respected by all and everyone in Kutch was safe under his protection. In short, it is with good reason that what has been well described as 'the energetic, excellent, and economic rule' of Maharao Desal II is still gratefully remembered by Kutchis.

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A NEW AGE DAWNS

DURING the closing years of Maharao Desal's life, relations between him and his heir-apparent, Prince Pragmal, became strained. The system of government practised in Kutch, as in other Rajput States, had never solved the problem of the position which ought to be allotted to an heir-apparent who attained his majority while his father was still alive. As Yuvaraj, of course, he was entitled to his separate establishment and to all the honours due to his rank. But what place could be found for him in the administration except by dividing an authority which by its nature was inherently indivisible—the authority of a Ruler who was 'absolute master' in his own country? Few Rulers were willing to make the experiments: to do so would mean certain friction between father and son and probably bad blood between the household and the advisers of the Maharao on one side and the household and advisers of the Yuvaraj on the other.

This difficulty, as preceding pages of the present narrative have shown, is a familiar occurrence in the history of the Kutch Ruling Family—as, indeed, of many other Rajput dynasties. In more lawless times, it sometimes expressed itself in civil war. In the case of Maharao Desal and Prince Pragmal, the breach was never serious; and was shortly healed when the Ruler's health so far declined that he asked the Bombay



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Government to allow him to resign his administrative responsibilities to a Regency Council on which he nominated Prince Pragmal. This Council followed the precedent of 1819 in its composition. The Political Agent presided: the members, chosen by the Maharao, consisted of the heir-apparent, the Diwan and two of the *bhayyad*. But in less than a year from its appointment in July 1859, the Maharao's relations with his Yuvaraj were so satisfactory that he asked for the dissolution of the Council and the transfer to Prince Pragmal of full powers of managing public affairs. Only a few weeks after the new arrangement had come into effect, Maharao Desal died, and Prince Pragmal, already in the saddle, was formally installed as Maharao Pragmal II in July 1860.

Whereas Maharao Desal had been a link, as it were, between the Old Kutch and the new, Maharao Pragmal belonged definitely to the modern age. Maharao Desal had been born in an atmosphere of civil war and rebellion: it was during his reign that Kutch made the transition from anarchy to order. He had adapted himself magnificently to the needs of the new era, yet he did not cease entirely to belong to the old. The state which he maintained, the surroundings which were congenial to him, indeed his whole manner of life, as described by Mrs Postans, might have been observed by a traveller visiting any of his ancestors during the two centuries preceding his own era. Yet such was the natural goodness and intelligence of this Ruler that he led his subjects to accept not only peaceably, but almost, as it were, inevitably, the paramountcy of the British, without losing the confidence of the Kutchis or forfeiting the regard of the new masters of India. When account is taken of the high strategic importance which the British attached to Kutch, because of its proximity to Sind, the frequent references, in the secret minutes left by successive Governors of Bombay, to the truth, honesty, and fair dealing of Maharao Desal, afford irrefutable testimony to his success in steering his kingdom through the difficult and dangerous times in which he lived.



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Maharao Pragmal was well fitted to continue his father's work, albeit with a difference. Whereas Maharao Desal's position had been partly conditioned by events external to Kutch—the Afghan War of 1838, the establishment of British forces in Sind, the final annexation of that country in 1843, the revolt against British authority in 1857—Maharao Pragmal's reign was marked by Kutch's entry into an era of almost complete tranquility in common with the rest of India. The Company's rule had come to an end: Queen Victoria's proclamation guaranteeing the Treaties with the Princes, to be followed shortly by the 'sanads of adoption', seemed to promise perpetual continuity to Rao Khengar's descendants in the occupation of the *gaddi* of Kutch. Further, with the British seizure of Sind, Kutch lost its strategic importance. It was no longer an outpost of Imperial authority in the face of a potential enemy. Although its enterprising merchants continued to range far and wide outside, as they had been accustomed to do for centuries, finding even wider scope for their commercial abilities in the peaceful conditions which British naval might maintained over the oceans of the world, Kutch itself began to drop back into a traditional isolation. A far-flung network of commercial connections linked the country to Zanzibar, East Africa, Somaliland, Aden, the Persian Gulf and Egypt, as well as to the great ports of Bombay, Madras and Calcutta and to India's inland marts. It was in these channels, rather than in efforts to develop the scanty natural resources of their own land, that the sons of Kutch found scope for their energies. Abroad, they were enterprising, progressive, and, indeed, 'hustling'. At home, they loved the old ways and clung to them with tenacity, just as they revered the deities and honoured the shrines which had become hallowed to their forefathers throughout the centuries. Thus, for many decades, time was almost at a standstill in Kutch, while tranquility began to pass imperceptibly into stagnation. Only a strong, centralized administration could bring the country into line with modern progress: but while half Kutch was in *bharryad* hands, the Durbar was paralysed.



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This course of events was by no means obvious at the beginning of Maharao Pragmal's reign. Outwardly, nothing changed. There was still a Subsidiary Force at Bhuj, as if Kutch still stood in need of protection from some imminent enemy across the Rann. There were still numerous British officers, civil and military, in Kutch—enough to warrant the continued publication of the weekly news-sheet containing social engagements, nature notes and 'small town' gossip. Like his father, Maharao Pragmal was a staunch ally of the British in accordance with the spirit as well as with the letter, of the Treaty obligations which linked him to them. This fact did not prevent him, any more than it had prevented his father, from speaking his mind to them very frankly, especially upon the subjects of the British guarantee to the *bhayyad*. He took up the struggle to assert the rights of the *gaddi* at the point where his father had been obliged, by failing health, to abandon it, and he pursued the same aims with equal pertinacity and, indeed, with a greater variety of tactics. Quite early in his reign he showed himself a stiff upholder of the claims which his father had put forward. He imposed billets both on defaulting *bhayyad* and also directly upon their tenants. He used the resources of the Durbar to acquire land and jurisdiction from needy *bhayyad*. The success of his tactics caused a good deal of concern both to the Political Agent and to the Government of Bombay. Both commented acidly upon the advantageous position which he was building up for the Durbar through the fines which he executed, through the system of infanticide-inspection of *bhayyad* villages upon which he insisted and through his extension of the authority of the Durbar Police to take cognizance of offences outside Durbar territory.

In the long drawn-out paper controversy about Durbar claims and *bhayyad* rights which continued for all the fifteen years of Maharao Pragmal's reign between the Durbar, the Political Agent of Kutch, the Bombay Government, and the Government of India, the British at length became ruefully aware that the guarantee which had been given to the *bhayyad*



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in 1819 was operating to prevent Kutch from developing the kind of administration which the interests of its inhabitants required. In 1869 the Government of India noted that where *bhayyad* rights had fallen into disuse, there was no need to resuscitate them, the exercise of rights likely to cause misrule was to be opposed, the Maharao was to be encouraged and strengthened in the exercise of his legitimate powers and care was to be taken to avoid weakening his authority by any stretch of the guaranteed rights beyond their reasonable meaning. The warning was timely. Already there was a marked contrast between the conditions prevailing in Durbar territory—in spite of the fact that upon the inhabitants of that territory fell the main burden of the taxation which supported the Government—and the conditions prevailing in that half of Kutch where the *bhayyad* asserted their independence of the Durbar. The *bhayyad* as a whole took little interest in public affairs. It is true that they generally treated their tenants with consideration—they could not, indeed, afford to do otherwise. But the practice of subdivision, which, with the suppression of infanticide, had now begun to exert its full effects, broke up the *bhayyad* estates into fragments so small that even some of the *tilats*, the heads of the families, gradually found themselves too impoverished and too rustic to exercise effectively the jurisdictional rights which the British guarantee conferred upon them. Such a state of affairs was quite incompatible with efficient government and the British were eventually persuaded to divide the guarantee-holders into classes, according to their status and their fitness to exercise jurisdiction, and to propose a structure of special institutions intended to reconcile their own guarantee with the admitted needs of Kutch.

Maharao Pragmal fought hard throughout his reign to introduce a system of administration which would be capable of bringing the country forward; but he was handicapped at every turn by the British guarantee which removed half of Kutch from his jurisdiction. The tenacity which he displayed in pressing upon the British his point of view, namely that the



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guarantee of 1819 related only to the landed rights of the *bhayyad* and neither did, nor could, assure them in the exercise of a civil and criminal jurisdiction incompatible with the supremacy of the Durbar, is apparent from the voluminous minutes, representations, reports, memorials, petitions and suggestions which fill so many folio volumes. Twice did the Maharao fight his way on appeal right up to the Secretary of State for India in London. On the second occasion he actually sent his Diwan, Kazi Shahabudin, to England to represent his views. The upshot, in each instance, was the gain of some valuable ground. Throughout the whole contest, the Maharao's tactics were dignified in the extreme. When the British pressed upon him an arrangement which he felt that he could not accept, he made over to the Political Agent the management of all affairs between the Durbar and the *bhayyad*, placing at that official's disposal a portion of his own establishment and making over to him a seal similar to that used by the Durbar. Eventually the Maharao succeeded in one of his main objectives, the right to nominate the members of the Jadeja Court, which was created to hear civil and criminal cases both in the estates of the guarantee-holders and beyond them. Appeals lay to this Court in all but minor cases from the jurisdiction exercised by the guarantee-holders: it was presided over first by the Political Agent, later by the Naib Diwan. Where injustice could be proved, it was open to the Maharao, on the advice of the Political Agent, to call for, and if necessary, quash the proceedings of any of the *bhayyad* courts. At long last, the whole exhausting controversy was brought to some sort of a compromise conclusion by the elaborate '*Bhayyad* Settlement of 1875' which Maharao Pragmal sanctioned, but did not live to sign. From this settlement there grew up the complicated jurisdictional system which afflicted Kutch right up to the time of its final merger into the Indian Republic in 1948.

There were first the courts which operated only in Durbar territory; secondly, the courts which operated only in *bhayyad* territory; thirdly the separate jurisdiction of the Thakor Sahib



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of Morvi inside the Adhoi enclave; fourthly the special Jadeja Court and finally the High Court, dealing with the more serious civil and criminal cases throughout the State (with the exception of the Morvi territory), the sentences of which, if they involved death, or transportation for life, or more than fourteen years' imprisonment, were subject to confirmation by the Maharao himself. The system was defective in many ways, and would have worked even less satisfactorily than it did but for the natural tendency of the Durbar's courts, with their better-trained officers and more uniform procedure, to extend their jurisdiction over all but the most insignificant cases. Even so, it was an intolerable anachronism to burden modern times.

This great controversy between the Durbar and the *bhayyad* over their respective rights, which attracted so much attention and consumed so much energy during the reigns of Maharao Desal and Pragmal, has little interest to the historian of to-day. In the record of Kutch, its main importance is twofold. First, it prevented the Rulers of Kutch from building up in the nineteenth century the efficient administration which the country needed; secondly it occupied their time and engrossed their activity almost to the exclusion of other matters. Both these effects were regrettably noticeable, to the permanent loss of much that would have benefited the people of Kutch, during the reign of Maharao Pragmal. He was a man of outstanding capacity, endowed with administrative ability of a high order. At the very beginning of his reign, his personality inspired so much confidence that the management of the security arrangements in the Wagad, for long the charge of a special police force under the Assistant Political Agent, was made over to his control. In the intervals of his preoccupation with efforts to regain for the Durbar the power essential for the mere task of governing, he framed codes for the guidance of his officers in matters of civil and criminal justice, he extended medical relief, he set on foot many useful public works and he encouraged trade and commerce. Had he been, in reality, 'master' of his territory in the words of the Treaty of 1819, he would



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have made Kutch one of the most progressive and best-administered of the Indian States.

Among his most notable achievements was the founding of a system of State education throughout Kutch. He saw that the time had come to supplement the work of the existing institutions of ancient learning, such as the *poshal* for bardic poetry in Bhuj and the Sanskrit College at Mandvi, by schools which would train young Kutchis in the requirements of more modern times. At the beginning of his reign, there were only three modern schools in Kutch—one Anglo-vernacular and two vernacular. Thanks to the Maharao's efforts and to his influence with the *bharryad*, this number rose to fourteen in the next ten years, of which nine were in Durbar territory and five were in the territory of the *bharryad*. By the time of his death, there were seventy-one schools, including the High School founded by the Maharao himself, named Alfred High School in honour of the then Duke of Edinburgh, which taught up to the Entrance Standard of the Bombay University. Maharao Pragmal endowed scholarships for Kutchi students at the University and made grants to promising young men who wished to leave Kutch to study at the distant schools and colleges. He assisted and encouraged the creation of libraries in Bhuj, Mandvi, and Mundra.

The Maharao was active in providing material improvements throughout Durbar territory. He constructed a new breakwater and important harbour works at Mandvi, he built the great Pragsar tank in the Chadwa hills, he made the causeway in the Hamirsar lake at Bhuj. He contrived to find enough money to extend the road system, to repair the walls of Mandvi, to deepen and to improve many tanks, to build a new jail, a new hospital, new stables and even a new palace for himself in Bhuj on modern Italianate lines with a lofty clock tower. It is astonishing to consider how much he contrived to achieve with his comparatively slender resources. The Durbar revenue was, it is true, increasing: from Rs.715,000 (£71,000) in 1852-53 it rose to Rs.1,48,000 (£148,000) in 1876-77. This was



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largely due to a rise in customs receipts from Rs.175,000 (£17,500) to Rs.800,000 (£80,000): but prudent management and good order had also raised the receipts from land-revenue from Rs.200,000 (£20,000) to Rs.412,000 (£41,200).

Yet planning for improvement was very difficult because of the recurrent nightmare of uncertain rainfall. In 1860, the rains failed entirely: large numbers of people moved to Sind, Kathiawad and Bombay and thousands of cattle perished. The Maharao sacrificed all import duties for two months on grain and fodder: he started relief work and opened cheap grain shops. Such a set-back was serious when the whole State Budget was so small. In 1862, on the other hand, there was so much rain that damaging floods occurred: villages were destroyed and an invasion of locusts consumed what the floods had spared. Next year, although the rains were good, food was short because the high price of cotton, caused by the American Civil War (1861-65), had tempted the cultivators to extend unduly the area under this valuable cash crop. Again the Durbar had to start cheap grain shops and to lose several month's revenue from import duties. Similar conditions prevailed in 1864: it was the Durbar's finances which suffered. Indeed, through most of Maharao Pragmal's reign, the years in which rainfall was satisfactory, or in which locusts did not appear, were very few.

When it is remembered that the revenue from land owned by the *bhayyad* and other chiefs amounted to very nearly as much as that which came into the Durbar treasury, the success of the Maharao in making as much progress as he did in a variety of directions deserves commendation. As Sir Richard Temple, then Governor of Bombay, remarked when he visited Kutch in 1877: 'I observe one peculiarity here which is this, that while His Highness the Rao is the master of the province of Kutch, and has to defend the whole country, to carry on its entire administration and to be responsible for its moral and material prosperity, he enjoys only half its revenues, the other half going to his numerous relations called collectively



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the *bhayyad*'. The Governor went on to exhort the *bhayyad* to bear their share in general expenses, to co-operate with the Ruler in effecting improvements by establishing schools and dispensaries, by building roads and by encouraging trade: further warning them that the jurisdiction which they exercised could not be confirmed to those not qualified by education, ability and size of holdings to exercise it.

This official pronouncement was delivered just after Maharao Pragmal's death and, had he lived to hear it, he would have asked for no better evidence of his success in convincing the British that the guarantee given to the *bhayyad* in 1819 was a mistake which needed quietly to be redressed. The tragedy was that this exceptionally capable administrator should have been obliged to sacrifice so much time and energy in obtaining permission, as it were, to administer at all. Like his father before him, he was the best informed man in the State with every detail at his finger-tips. Like his father, also, he was congenitally opposed to decentralizing authority, preferring to keep as much as possible of it in his own hands. But, like Henry VIII of England, he had the knack of using able men for his own purposes and of relieving them of office when they became embarrassingly unpopular. In 1861, for example, Motilal Jivandas and Madhavdas Ramdas became joint Ministers. They pushed through a number of useful reforms in the administration: they finished and bridged a new road between Bhuj and Mandvi and they introduced cotton gins and screw presses to deal with the cotton crop. But they pressed the rights of the Durbar against the landholders too forcefully and when the Political Agent accused them of tampering with the currency in 1863, the Maharao suspended them and appointed Jagjivan Mehta, a Nagur Brahmin. He was an old and trusted servant of the State; but the real power was exercised by Valabhji Mehta, who displaced Jagjivan in 1865. Valabhji Mehta was a man of great ability but his handling, too, of the *bhayyad* was tactless. On the advice of the Political Agent, the Maharao dismissed him and borrowed the services of the



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deputy collector of Sarat, Shahabudin Ibrahim. He served the Durbar well and was sent to England to represent Maharao Pragmal's views to the Secretary of State in the course of the tussle over *bhayyad* rights. He resigned in 1868, and was succeeded by Bhogilal Pranvalabhdas, who remained Diwan until 1874 when he was followed by Laxman Krishnaji—the last of Maharao Pragmal's ministers.

Maharao Pragmal, although he fought the British stoutly to vindicate his rights, enjoyed their sincere esteem throughout his reign. In all matters unconnected with the British guarantee to the *bhayyad*, the Government knew that they could rely upon his sincere co-operation. This was especially valuable to them in their continued efforts to check *sati*, infanticide and slavery. The suppression of the first and second was now mainly a question of constant vigilance, which the Maharao exercised without intermission. But about the middle of his reign, the question of slavery once again emerged into prominence—not, indeed, in Kutch, where it had been effectively stamped out following Maharao Desal's proclamation of 1836—but in Zanzibar. The connection between Zanzibar and Mandvi had long been close: there is a story current that Vasco da Gama saw Kutch ships anchored at Mombasa and in the harbour of Zanzibar and took a Kutchi pilot into his service to help him on the last stages of his voyage to the Malabar coast. The extensive trade between India and Zanzibar in such commodities as cotton, rice, salt and pottery, which were exported in return for ivory, cloves and rhinoceros hide, had been almost entirely in Kutchi hands for centuries. Although the Indian market was closed to slaves, the trade in human beings between Africa and the Arab countries and some of the Persian Gulf ports continued to be very profitable. The Arab Sultans of Zanzibar, who became independent of the Imams of Muscat in 1832, saw no reason to forbid it. The British made little headway through representations to Sultan Sayed Bargash so they decided to approach the matter through the Kutchi families, who provided the Sultan with his Wazirs, dominated the



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commerce of Zanzibar and handled the trade in slaves, as in all other commodities.

Maharao Pragmal was very willing to help. In 1869, he issued a proclamation to all his subjects residing temporarily or permanently abroad, informing them that he had authorized the British Government to punish them like British subjects if they broke the law forbidding slave-trading. He warned Kutchis in Zanzibar particularly that the British would liberate all the slaves without compensation if they persisted with the slave-trade: that they would be treated as criminals, not only outside Kutch but inside Kutch as well if they did not obey. In order to give the proclamation full effect, the Maharao sent his Diwan, Kazi Shahabudin, to Zanzibar. A great meeting of all the Kutchi merchants was held and the proclamation was read. The head of the greatest Kutchi firm in Zanzibar, the merchant-prince Jeram Shivji, freed all the slaves in his godowns. Others followed his example, publicly declaring their loyalty to the Maharao and their determination to obey his orders. As a token of goodwill, the Kutchi mercantile houses undertook to support their ex-slaves for a year and a day, so that they could either seek work or return to their homes. This action of the Maharao broke the back of slave-trading in Zanzibar; but the commerce was so profitable that some relics of it continued clandestinely. Again, the British Government applied to the Maharao for help. In 1872, accordingly, he issued a final command couched in the sternest language: the trade must stop, once and for all, immediately. Not only would those who persisted in it be punished by the British, but he, their Maharao, would confiscate all the property which the defaulters possessed in Kutch. The threat sufficed and slave-trading ceased in Zanzibar.

It is hardly to be wondered at that the British held Maharao Pragmal in high esteem and that Queen Victoria conferred upon him the distinction of Knight Grand Commander of the Star of India—a decoration which, at that time, was considered a special mark of approval for personal worth and outstanding success in good government. Not since the time of Maharao



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Lakho had the rulers of Kutch received a decoration from the paramount lords of India. The new British decoration, it is true, differed from the Mahi Maritib which had been conferred by the House of Timur because it was personal, not hereditary; but its incidence marks the beginning of the process by which, in less than four decades, Kutch was again to be united in closer ties to the rest of India. In another respect, too, Maharao Pragmal resumed a practice long intermitted: like his ancestor Rao Bharmalji I, who had left Kutch to pay his homage to the Emperor Jahangir at Ahmedabad in 1617, he too left his country to do honour to the new overlords, the British. Three times did he go to Bombay: once to meet HRH the Duke of Edinburgh in 1870, once to take part in a Chapter of the Star of India in 1871 and once to do homage to HRH the Prince of Wales in 1875. The precedent thus set was to be followed by his son, his grandson, and his great-grandson right up to the time when Kutch itself was merged into the larger entity of an independent India.

Maharao Pragmal returned to his country from his last visit to Bombay with sickness heavy upon him: he died at the early age of thirty-seven, after only fifteen years of rule, on January 1, 1876. His son, then aged ten, succeeded him with the title of Maharao Khengar III. The new Maharao's long reign, which lasted until 1942, was finally to bridge the interval between the Kutch of yesterday and the Kutch of to-day.

The well-tried expedient of a Council of Regency was again called into service. Presided over by the Political Agent, it consisted of the Diwan, one representative of the *bhayyad*, and—a sign of the times—one representative of the mercantile community. The Council proceeded to build steadily upon the administrative foundations which Maharao Pragmal had laid. Kutch was organized into the subdivisions which still exist to-day—Rapur, Bhachau, Mundra, Bhuj, Mandvi, Abdasa (with Nakhatrana), and Lakhpat. Each had a revenue and a judicial officer, with a separate organization for police and village administration. Surveys were set on foot to ascertain



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the mineral and other resources of the State; additional harbour works, including the main pier and breakwater, were begun at Mandvi, trade was encouraged and local industries were developed.

The system of educating a young Maharao in his own country had proved so successful in the case of Maharao Desal and Maharao Pragmal that it was followed with Maharao Khengar also. Among its greatest advantages was that the future Ruler never lost touch with his own subjects and his own surroundings, among which he would pass his life. At the same time it was easy to provide him with tutors who would supervise his education along both Indian and Western lines. The boy Maharao Khengar soon showed signs of rectitude and a capacity for steady application to his studies. He profited notably from able tutors, both Indian and British—chief among the latter being Captain Wray, of the Bombay Army, to whom the Maharao was in later years accustomed to pay high tribute, as the man mainly responsible for his own quite exceptional command of English. Maharao Khengar's mastery of this language marked him out from his contemporaries, even during an era when so many of the Indian Princes spoke it perhaps even more fluently than their mother tongue. He had a sensitive appreciation of the precise meaning of words and a meticulous exactness in the use of phrases, which surprised, and occasionally disconcerted, the successive generation of Englishmen with whom he was to work throughout his long life. His connoisseur-like assessment of each line, almost of every word, in the drafts which were submitted to him was, in his later years, to retard seriously the transaction of business and to cause him much difficulty of one kind and another. But in essence it was a manifestation of his quest for perfection, of his refusal to be satisfied with the second best, of his determination to exercise his keen intelligence upon every aspect of human relations, which proceeded from the exceptional quality of his mind. These same qualities were also manifested in Maharao Khengar's cultivated taste in Gujarati letters of which he was a



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great patron. During his reign, Kutch won the reputation of pioneering the publication both of many original works in Gujarati and of many translations into Gujarati from standard works in English and Sanskrit.

The power of his intellect developed early: as soon as he was sixteen years old he began to take part in the administration with the full approval of the Political Agent and of the Governor of Bombay, who have recorded their satisfaction at his high intelligence, splendid physique and mastery of manly exercise. It was wisely decided that he should make a tour of India in 1882 and 1883, so that he should see something of the countries and lands surrounding his own. Visiting Simla in 1883, he made a great impression upon the Viceroy, Lord Ripon, who wrote of him to Queen Victoria as 'a fine young man' and encouraged him in the intention, which he was forming, of going to England. As soon as he reached the age of eighteen, he was formally invested with full powers and, with the help of the very able Diwan, Rao Bahadur Manibhai Jasbhai, began to reign effectively in 1884.

The highlight of his early years as a Ruler was undoubtedly his visit to England in the company of his younger brother Prince Kalubha, to attend Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee. Lord Dufferin on March 31, 1887, wrote to the Queen about 'the very nice young Prince . . . who will undoubtedly make a very favourable impression upon Your Majesty'. The Viceroy's confidence was justified. The entries in Queen Victoria's Journal for the summer of 1887 (*Letters of Queen Victoria*, Third Series, Volume I, pp. 311, 334, 354) show that Maharao Khengar won the Queen's high approval. There are references to his handsomeness, his fluent English and his 'amiable, gentle and unaffected' nature. He was created Knight Grand Cross of the Indian Empire and his portrait, by Hall, was commissioned for hanging at Osborne (where it is still to be seen). When he went to Scotland in August, he was invited to shoot at Balmoral; the head of his stag was mounted so that it could be sent to him in Kutch; he was presented with two



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volumes of the Queen's Journals as a parting gift; and in a letter (September 29, 1887) which combines gracious dignity with almost affectionate interest, the Queen bade him farewell, and hoped that he would be inclined to revisit England and Scotland occasionally since she herself could not go to India 'but alas! at my age and dreading sea voyages as well as heat, it would be impossible'. (Royal Archives, N 44/76.)

The young Maharao took his full share in the festivities connected with the Jubilee and the magnificent ball which he gave in the house in Queen's Gate which became his residence for the season was among the sensations of that brilliant social concourse. Many royal personages attended it: the Prince of Wales brought Prince Albert and Prince George, and the future Queen Mary, then Princess May, accompanied her mother, the Duchess of Teck. The cream of London society attended, for it was regarded as a great novelty that an Indian Prince should give a ball in London. Maharao Khengar made many friends—some of them lifelong—as a result of his first visit to England; and there can be little doubt that it was then he first learned to distinguish unerringly between the different gradations of the British and Continental social hierarchy—a faculty which preserved him from the involuntary solecisms which foreign guests of birth and breeding found so puzzling when they visited the Courts of some of his brother Princes. But the visit to England and Scotland in 1887, like all the other tours abroad which Maharao Khengar was to undertake in later years, had an essentially serious content: he travelled widely, he observed much, he laid the foundations of the rich store of knowledge of men and of things which, before he died, won him a reputation for integrity of judgment, for cautious wisdom and for ripeness of experience, which was unique in India. Before returning home, Maharao Khengar took the opportunity to visit some of the principal cities in France, Germany, Austria, Italy and Egypt. He would have stayed longer in the west but for the sudden death of his brother-in-law, Maharaja Dungar Singh of Bikanir.



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In Kutch, a heavy task awaited him for it was Maharao Khengar III who, in the course of his long reign, bore the main responsibility of bringing his country to the position which it occupied when it finally became part of independent India. The Council of Regency—or Council of Administration as it became after the young Maharao joined it—had done its work well. The State revenues had increased to Rs.2 millions and land revenue had risen by sixty per cent. Some 59,000 acres of new land had been brought under cultivation: the number of schools had risen from forty-three to 116 and the number of hospitals and dispensaries from two to six. Public works in the shape of harbour improvements, bridges, roads, travellers' bungalows, tanks and wells had been undertaken at a cost of Rs.2,700,000. In relation to the needs of the people of Kutch and to the size of the country, this represented only a beginning; while the meagreness and uncertainty of the State's financial resources and the withdrawal of *bhayyad* and other zamindar territory from the control of the Durbar were serious handicaps to rapid future progress. But the Maharao was determined to persevere along the sound lines already laid down. He made the extension of both secondary and primary education, and, in particular, the education of girls, a principle objective of his efforts. He founded many scholarships: he established an Arts School to inject new life into Kutch's ancient handicrafts and traditional industries: he encouraged study abroad and he was among the first of the Indian Rulers to appreciate the necessity for technical education. He impressed his own sense of the importance of education upon the wealthy merchants among his subjects and the efforts of the Durbar were worthily supplemented by private endowments which were to play a great part in Kutch's educational system. Had he commanded the resources appropriate to his position among the Princes, he would certainly have raised Kutch very high among the 'model States' of India. In many respects, he was a generation ahead of his time in his ideas and, until the beginning of the present century, Kutch may be said to have held its own



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against all competitors. When Lord Curzon, a stern critic, visited Kutch in 1900, he reported to Queen Victoria on the work of the Maharao in very favourable terms. He was greatly impressed by the way in which the administration was coping with the relief-work necessitated by the terrible famine of that year and by the efficient measures which had been taken to limit the ravages of the bubonic plague, which had attacked Kutch in 1897 and had remained in an endemic, if restricted, form ever since. Maharao Khengar's own efforts, and the vigour of the measures which his popularity among all classes of his subjects enabled him to adopt, had, in fact, largely averted a repetition of the frightful calamity of 1812, when a similar attack is estimated to have carried off almost half the inhabitants of the State.

The dawn of the new century was to bring many problems to Kutch and to its Ruler. Among the greatest of them was the increasing difficulty of keeping up with the developments which were taking place both in British India and in other Indian States like Baroda and Mysore. So long as the fashion in administrative machinery remained relatively simple, and the scope for social services was restricted by traditional ideas, Kutch was able, thanks to the advanced ideas of the Maharao and to his careful husbanding of the Durbar's modest resources, to hold its own. But as the century progressed, the demand that Governments should do more to give their subjects education, medical relief, social services, works of public utility, easy communications, and all the amenities of civilized life which the western world had developed, grew more and more insistent. The resulting expansion in governmental activities involved heavy expenditure, which before very long set standards that were quite beyond the limited resources which Maharao Khengar could command. What he did in fact succeed in achieving has been indicated in the first part of this book: his foundation of the modern system of education and medical relief, his irrigation work, his land reclamation, his afforestation and his pioneering work of the new port of



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Kandla—now, at long last, beginning, under the Government of India, to realize the possibilities which his foresight had perceived in it. But from first to last, his enlightened efforts for the State were handicapped by financial stringency, due in part to Kutch's situation in the 'famine belt' which exposed the country to recurrent failure of the monsoon: in part to the withdrawal from the Durbar of the land revenue of nearly half the State because of the British guarantee to the *bhayyad* and other landlords; and in part to the artificial limitations imposed by the Government of India upon Kutch's sole possible source of expanding revenue—its external trade.

This was first manifested in regard to salt, of which Kutch has natural supplies which are probably unequalled in any other part of the world. In the course of the nineteenth century the British Government found that the old Moghal duty on salt was a valuable source of revenue if systematically collected; and they began to take under their own control the existing salt supplies. Kutch, with its unlimited natural facilities for salt production, its many ships, and its excellent sea communications, could easily have competed successfully in the Indian market with the Government establishments. It was not permitted to do this. In 1885 the Durbar was obliged to sign an agreement, pledging itself to refrain from exporting salt to any part of India; and so to regulate the trade with foreign ports outside India that no salt could find its way back. Vessels carrying salt as even part of their cargo from Kutch were forbidden to call at any Indian ports: salt could only be loaded into vessels sailing directly to the foreign port to which the salt was consigned. The result was to kill any possibility of using Kutch's natural resources in salt commercially. As the *Bombay Presidency Gazetteer* (Volume V) acidly noted in 1880: 'On the Rann, salt is collected in places, but does not form an article of export, although it might be obtained in enormous quantities.'

There remained the *entrepot* trade of Mandvi and other Kutch ports, the possibilities of which had been illustrated by a steady increase in the customs revenue which accrued to the



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Durbar since the time when law and order were established after British intervention. But in this direction again, expansion was artificially checked by factors external to Kutch. The first of these factors was the growing competition of the Kathiawad maritime States which, towards the close of the nineteenth century, were beginning to spend money in developing wharfage facilities and in attracting trade. To begin with, they had the advantage over Kutch because they were nearer to the valuable hinterland of Gujarat, which provided them with a ready market for what they could import, and a number of them, led by Morvi, began to build steam tramways and railways to exploit the possibilities of rapid transit for passengers and goods. Kutch, isolated as it was, and with its communications to the north handicapped by the Rann, found it difficult to compete with these new developments.

Between Kutch and Morvi feeling ran particularly high; for among the results of the British guarantee of 1819 to the *bhayyad* was an official inquiry into the status of the Adhoi *enclave*. Prior to the deposition of Maharao Bharmal and the formal intervention of the British, the Adhoi *enclave*, with its two isolated patches of dependent territory, had merely been a part of Kutch of which the Morvi Thakurs happened to be Zamindars. The British, convinced as they were by the claim of the feudal tenants to be independent of the Durbar of Kutch in all essential respects and having taken the States of Kathiawad under their exclusive authority by arrangement with the Gaekwar and the Peishwa in 1821-22, accepted the Morvi contention that Adhoi and its dependencies were outside the jurisdiction of the Kutch Durbar. They finally decided to exclude them from Kutch altogether. Thus Adhoi and its outlying blocks were converted, against all precedent, into islands of Morvi territory inside Kutch. This was an astounding reversal of the original position under which Morvi itself was a *jagir* held by the Raos of Kutch on the mainland of Kathiawad. The British, who were becoming accustomed in Western India to the interlocking of jurisdictions between patches of the



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territory of one State and patches of the territory of another, as well as to the existence of islands of States' territory in the middle of British districts, saw nothing strange about the arrangement. To Kutchis, however, with their feelings of separation and of distinct nationality, which had been developed through the centuries, there was something almost shocking in this intrusion of a 'foreign' territory into the dominions of their Ruler, even though the Thakurs of Morvi were themselves in the direct line of Rao Khengar I. The Maharaos of Kutch, from the time of Desal onwards, struggled persistently to alter the British attitude and to restore Adhoi to the territory by which it was surrounded. The Thakurs of Morvi resisted the Kutch claims with equal tenacity.

The dispute between Kutch and Morvi took an acute turn when maritime, as well as territorial, rights became an issue. As we have seen, the Kathiawad States with seaboard possessed a long maritime tradition, and the general peace which the British had brought to western India, together with the suppression of piracy, were now acting as a great incentive to the development of seaborne commerce. Morvi had a port, Vavania, on the Kathiawad side of the Gulf of Kutch. It had also a harbour at Janghi, across the Gulf, in an island of Adhoi territory. So long as Morvi remained a fief of Kutch, Vavania and Janghi were of small importance, but each had a certain share of the transit trade across the Gulf of Kutch. When Morvi became an independent holding under Prince Kayan in Rao Pragmal's time, the Rao's traditional supremacy over the waters of the Gulf was never challenged: Vavania and Janghi could only exist as ports subject to his maritime rights of wreckage, tolls and the like. Right down to British times, shipping traversing the Gulf of Kutch was liable to pay dues to Kutch Durbar officials for permits to navigate those waters and all foreshore rights belonged to the Maharao.

A different position arose when Morvi was recognized by the British as a separate State in Kathiawad and when its holding of Adhoi was divorced from the surrounding Kutch



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territory. The Thakurs of Morvi did not see why they should not take their share in the trade which was developing along the Kathiawad coast to supply the markets of Kathiawad and Gujarat. They began to spend money upon Vavania and Janghi and to resist the claim of the Kutch Durbar officers to exact the customary tolls, to exercise right over wreckage on these shores of the Gulf of Kutch which were in Morvi territory and to control Morvi's seaborne trade in the interests of Kutch. The dispute flared up after Maharao Pragmal II's death and during the Regency administration which preceded Maharao Khengar's accession to full authority. The British decided that, with so much 'right'—as they conceived it—on either side, it was essential to make a 'complete separation' of the interests of the two States in Kutch, in Kathiawad and in the creeks and channels and lands between the two shores. An officer of the Indian Civil Service, Mr R. M. Kennedy, was appointed to suggest a plan of separation. Unfortunately for all concerned the difficulties soon became clear. Maharao Khengar was, above all things, anxious to be rid of the incubus of the Adhoi *enclave*. But it should have been obvious to the British that on the assumption that the 'complete separation' which they professed to desire was to be effected on the basis of an exchange, Kutch had no 'territorial equivalent' to offer. By failing to insist that 'complete separation' ought to be carried through even at the cost, if necessary, of the purchase of the rights of one party by the other, at a figure to be fixed by arbitration, the British virtually ensured that the effort to disentangle the rights and claims of Kutch and Morvi in such a way as to put an end to the dispute would miscarry.

Mr Kennedy frankly admitted that he could do no more than effect 'partial separation' unless the Thakurs of Morvi were willing to be bought out of Adhoi. He assigned comparatively modest importance to the traditional maritime control exercised by the Kutch Durbar over the waters, the foreshore and the navigation of the Gulf of Kutch, and, in fact, he treated the maritime rights of Kutch and of Morvi more or less on an equal



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basis, without regarding the fact that in history the latter flowed from the former. He wrote a report proposing that an imaginary line should be drawn from the Gulf of Kutch along the centre of the Hansthal Creek, then along the centre of Chach Nes, and so along the centre of the Rann equidistant from the Kutch and Morvi shores. On the Morvi side of the line, the Morvi authorities were to exercise riparian, customs and maritime rights free of all interference, while Kutch rights in that area, including those hitherto claimed or exercised over the 'territorial waters' of Morvi and the port of Vavania, were to be completely extinguished. Inside Kutch, four villages in the outlying dependencies of Adhoi, including the harbour of Janghi, were to be made over to Kutch, while the main Adhoi block was to remain with Morvi 'with no special privileges of trade but with the same rights that are enjoyed by many native States holding small territories surrounded by British districts'. The Maharao and his Government protested bitterly against these proposals, regarding them as completely unfair. But in spite of petitions, memorials, and representations, they were confirmed by the Secretary of State and finally issued in binding form in 1904.

On balance, Morvi had scored heavily over Kutch. At the price of four villages, including one insignificant harbour on the Kutch shore, the Morvi Durbar had gained complete maritime independence with freedom to develop its port facilities as it chose. At the same time it retained intact as part of its own territory the main block of the Adhoi *enclave*—the extinguishing of which had been among the main objectives of the policy of 'complete separation' to which the British were committed. It can hardly be a matter of surprise, therefore, that to the day of his death Maharao Khengar fought against the 'Kennedy Award', striving to reopen the whole question in order to regain the historic rights of the Kutch Durbar over Adhoi. He took the best available legal advice: he petitioned in succession the Government of Bombay, the Government of India, and the Secretary of State, but all his efforts proved unavailing because



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he could never bring the British authorities to the point of reconsidering what he always maintained was the factor which vitiated the entire 'Kennedy Award', namely, Kennedy's undervaluation of Kutch's historic control of shipping, navigation and maritime rights throughout the entire waters of the Gulf of Kutch. The essential justice of his contention was vindicated as the twentieth century proceeded. The maritime rights which Morvi had secured, when intelligently exploited and backed up by the road and rail communications with which successive Rulers of that State linked Vavania, and later their new port of Naulakhi, to the populous cities of Saurashtra and Gujarat, brought much wealth. As early as 1903-4, the total trade of Morvi by sea and land had reached the impressive figure of more than Rs.2 million, of which imports alone accounted for two-thirds. Had the ancient overriding mastery of Kutch over the waters of the Gulf not been set aside, little of this trade could have accrued to Morvi. But thanks to the 'Kennedy Award', and to the extremely clever use which the Morvi Durbar made of the maritime rights thus secured, this small State of less than 350 square miles became among the wealthiest regions of Kathiawad, with fluid resources far superior to those at the disposal of Kutch. Even when the Government of India, alarmed at the diversion of customs revenue which the development of the Kathiawad ports was causing, imposed a customs-line at Viramgam, and in other ways restricted the activities of the Kathiawad maritime States, Morvi continued to flourish while Kutch remained impoverished by comparison.

It is only fair to add that Maharao Khenger did not envy Morvi's prosperity: his interest centered entirely upon that State's continued possession of Adhoi. His sense of propriety was, indeed, affronted by certain of the manoeuvres adopted by some Kathiawad maritime States in the course of their bitter struggle to protect their interests against the stranglehold which the Government of India was steadily forcing upon them. He faced courageously the equivalent obstacles which that Government imposed upon Kutch, deliberately preferring to



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remain outside the Indian Customs Union and to endure the disabilities which such a position of isolation entailed, rather than to join in the scramble for profit which engrossed so much energy and imposed so many dubious activities on the other side of the Gulf. Yet along with his ceaseless efforts to reopen the Morvi award and to find some 'territorial equivalent' by purchase on the mainland which, as he hoped, the Government of India might be induced to persuade the Morvi Durbar to accept in exchange for Adhoi, he continued to press upon the British authorities the advantages which would accrue to a vast hinterland in India if road and rail communications were allowed to link Gujarat, Rajputana and even the area round Delhi, with the excellent Kutchi ports which could save hundreds of miles over the 'long haul' from Bombay. He was destined to die with both these objectives unachieved; but his foresight has been justified. To-day, there is no Morvi territory in Kutch. To-day Kandla, Gandhidam and Mandvi have direct communications with the hinterland which nature destined the Kutchi ports to serve.

During the first decade and a half of the new century, Maharao Khengar did everything possible to develop the potentialities of Kutch. Every year more waste land was reclaimed for the plough, more tanks and wells were constructed, the customs tariff was revised and lowered to encourage trade, improvements were effected in the port of Mandvi and attention was devoted to dredging the main channel, the narrow-gauge line between Bhuj, Anjar, Tuna and Bhachau was built, telegraph communications were established with the co-operation of the Indian postal authorities and education and medical relief advanced. The differences between the Maharao and the British over Adhoi were not allowed to affect his close and cordial relations either with the Political Department or with the Governments of Bombay and India. By degrees he built up for himself a reputation for honourable dealing, for integrity, and for conscientious devotion to the interests of his State, which was unsurpassed by any of his



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brother Princes. When the 1914-1918 war broke out, the Maharao and his Yuvaraj offered their personal services as well as the fullest co-operation of the State; and Maharao Khengar, in addition to generous support of war charities, and many special gifts to deserving causes, met the cost of maintaining an Indian Infantry Regiment for two complete years. In 1918, in recognition of his war services, the British Government conferred upon the Maharao 'the title of Maharao as an hereditary distinction'—a curiously belated gesture, considering that the title had figured among the designations of his ancestors for some two centuries.

The post-war years were a restless period in India. The British were committed to the goal of 'responsible Government' for the Indian people; but the instalment of progress envisaged in the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms failed to satisfy the aspirations which the leaders of the nationalist movement had for long been voicing. Mr Gandhi's first great movement of civil disobedience, and the Amritsar tragedy, together set in train the developments which in the next three decades were to bring independence to India: but in the meantime the political horizon remained stormy, and friction grew serious between the British and the Indian Nationalist leaders on the one hand, and between Hindu and Muslim groups inside the nationalist ranks.

Kutch remained to a large extent insulated from the main currents of the turbulent stream of Indian political life, for a variety of reasons. Almost half the total population of Kutch was accustomed to seek its living outside the State; and it was thus outside, rather than inside, Kutch that the political activities of the most vigorous and enterprising sections of the Kutchi people found their full scope. Like their kinsmen the Gujaratis, the Kutchis showed themselves in India strong supporters of the Indian National Congress, contributing liberally to the Party funds and often making great personal sacrifices for the cause. The famous revolutionary, Shyamji Krishnavarma, precursor of many 'activist' elements in the



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Indian national movement, was a Mandvi man. This Kutch attachment to the cause of Indian freedom became stronger than ever when Mahatma Gandhi, with his Kathiawadi origin and his kinship with the mercantile classes of Kathiawad, Gujarat and Kutch, became the leading figure in the Indian nationalist movement. Yet the keen nationalist convictions manifested outside Kutch often seemed to suffer some kind of a sea-change when they returned home. In spite of all that Maharao Khengar was doing, and trying to do, for his State, Kutch remained essentially a place where things went on in traditional ways, where the old gods were worshipped in the old fashion, where the essential conservatism of outlook which underlay the brilliant commercial aptitude in the Kutchis' make-up could find the satisfaction which it craved. At the head of this ancient and firmly rooted policy stood the venerated figure of Maharao Khengar, who was described by Mahatma Gandhi himself when he came to visit Kutch and had a long interview with the Maharao, as a great and wise ruler. It is true that there was a Congress Party in Kutch which pressed, though in somewhat half-hearted fashion, for reforms of various kinds, including more municipalities, more local councils and even full representative institutions. But in their innermost convictions, many Kutchis desired little change in the old ways. Those who felt that the atmosphere was too cramping for them found many opportunities for employing their talents abroad. Throughout the period when the Indian States Peoples Conference Organization was making things difficult for so many Indian Rulers, there was no trouble in Kutch. There, Ruler and people understood one another: outside 'agitators' were given a tolerant hearing and full freedom but went away having effected little. Kutch knew no repressive legislation—the Maharao would never descend to it—speech was free.

The growth of the nationalist movement, and the inevitability of its eventual success in securing political independence for India, caused the Indian Princes much anxiety and in the years which separated the first and the second world wars there



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was much consultation between them about the policy which they should adopt to meet the new conditions which they discerned ahead. The British gave many solemn pledges that these faithful allies would never be abandoned: that the Treaties would be observed in perpetuity, that all the Princes need do was to adapt their administrations to the changing times by promoting the welfare of their people and by associating them in some measure with the responsibilities of rule. Yet at the same time, the Indian Government took care to insist upon their own ultimate control over the Indian States and their Rulers, regardless of the spirit, and sometimes of the letter, of the original Treaties, by asserting the over-mastering right of British paramountcy. While it is quite true that the strong hand of British power had preserved many Indian States from internal revolution and from other disasters which might otherwise have destroyed them, the doctrine of paramountcy ultimately weakened the States by underlining their dependence upon British protection and thus isolating them from the main currents of Indian nationalist sentiment. The institution of the Chamber of Princes in 1921, though doubtless intended to foster the co-operation and promote the progress of the Indian States, completed this process of isolation by investing them with all the characteristics of a 'third force' in what had hitherto been a two-way struggle between the British and the movements of Indian nationalism. All this was the more unfortunate because 'British India' and the Indian States were alike parts of the same country: their interests were identical and if the Indian States had been left to themselves, they could have reached an understanding—as they did for the moment during the Round Table Conference in London in the early thirties, and as they very nearly did for good and all in 1947—with Indian nationalist leaders. In the event British policy, and their own dissensions, gradually led the Indian States along a road, from which there was no return, which eliminated them as an effective force in modern India.

Maharao Khengar marked these developments with un-



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easiness. He sympathized with the ideal of a self-governing India, and he knew that Kutch had an important contribution to make when this ideal came to be attained. At the same time, he saw that so long as the Indian States continued to be mere pawns on the political chessboard, isolated from the rest of India by British paramountcy and by the control exercised through the Political Department, their future must remain uncertain. He therefore joined in the effort, initiated by Rulers like Maharaja Ganga Singh of Bikanir, his nephew, and Maharaja Bhupendra Singh of Patiala, to reach some definition of British paramountcy which would, while securing to the British the rights which their Treaties with the Indian States had given them, at the same time leave the Princes some political initiative and some scope for negotiations with the newly-emerging forces in British India. In this attempt, he, and the other sponsors of the Indian States' case before the Butler Committee, appointed to investigate 'paramountcy' and the complaints of the Indian States against its operation, were disappointed: they gained nothing but yet another assurance that the British would never desert them. The Maharao's hopes underwent a revival in 1931, when, as a representative of the Indian States at the Round Table Conference, he helped to evolve the idea of a federal constitution for India, in which the States could play their part. But again he was disappointed, because in the subsequent negotiations it became clear to him that the main concern of the British were the interests, as they saw them, of British India, and that in such a vital matter as port-development and fiscal policy, there was no serious attempt to take the Indian States into genuine partnership.

In spite of his disagreement with many aspects of British policy towards the Indian States, Maharao Khengar had a deep affection for Britain and for the British connection with India. As he grew older, his reputation for wisdom and for integrity increased with his years. In 1921, when he had occupied his throne for almost half a century, he was chosen to represent the Indian Princes at the Imperial Conference in London. He



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received the freedom of the Cities of London and of Bath and he made the name of Kutch widely and honourably known both in the United Kingdom and throughout the Continent of Europe, where he travelled widely. He made a great impression upon all who met him by the breadth and variety of his interests. He was not only a senior Prince, with long experience of the problems of ruling: he was also a great sportsman, naturalist and ornithologist, deeply interested in animal life and in the behaviour of fauna both in captivity and in their natural surroundings. An excellent shot, he derived almost equal pleasure from hunting big game in India, from shooting grouse in Scotland and from stalking roebuck and bear on the estates of his many friends in France, Austria, Hungary and Poland. In 1925 he visited Europe again, enlarging still further his circle of acquaintances and winning the high esteem of the experts in the Zoological Society of London by his great knowledge of the habits of beasts and birds. Next year, he visited Africa, and further added to his reputation as a naturalist and sportsman. During the remainder of his life, he went to Europe as frequently as his responsibilities in Kutch permitted and became the best-known of all the Indian Princes, with the possible exception of the Aga Khan, in many Continental countries.

He had long foreseen the outbreak of the second world war: but the year 1939 depressed him sadly, since it seemed to herald further delays in working out the constitutional future of India, and to promise an increase of political tension between the British and the nationalist leaders. He had been on the throne for sixty-three years: he was well over seventy. His health was not what it once had been: he tired easily. Moreover, things had become difficult for him in Kutch. He had not been fortunate in his ministers: his confidence had sometimes been abused. He had become afraid to entrust authority to anyone: his meticulous care for detail, which, as he got older, sometimes interfered with his sense of relative values, made him difficult to work for: he found the burden of administration more and



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more onerous: arrears of work accumulated and there were complaints of serious delays in dealing with matters of great urgency. Once again, the ancient enigma of the status of the Yuvaraj of Kutch had emerged: once again, no solution had been found. Maharao Khengar's eldest son, Vijayarajji, was now a man of over fifty, with grown-up sons of his own. The Maharao and the Yuvaraj had made an honest effort to divide the work between them at an earlier period—but the effort failed. Rather than imperil his relations with his father, to whom he was devoted, Maharao Kumar Vijayarajji begged to be relieved of responsibilities and to be allowed to live as a private citizen. At length, Maharao Khengar obtained the services of an excellent English administrator, Colonel Webb, and things went more smoothly.

Before he died, rather suddenly, in 1942, Maharao Khengar had become almost a legendary figure with his people, with his brother Princes and with the British Government. He retained to the last his lively interest in men, in things and in the world around him. But in spite of his eager mind and far-ranging vision, there was much to be seen in the world of his later years of which he could not approve. He was bewildered by the hurrying tempo of the modern age. Even so, right to the end, his planning for the improvements of the economic conditions of Kutch continued. He experimented tirelessly with new crops, new trees, new methods. It was his misfortune—and the misfortune of Kutch—that he could never command the capital necessary to bring his admirable projects to full fruition. Yet even so, his work on Kandla Port, on afforestation and upon water conservation, laid the indispensable foundation upon which the government of independent India was later to build the Kutch of the future.

Maharao Vijayarajji, who succeeded his father in 1942, was nearer sixty than fifty when he was formally installed as the sixteenth descendant of Rao Khengar I to occupy the *gaddi* of Kutch. Throughout his life he had been to some extent overshadowed by his famous father and during later years he had



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been uneasily conscious that although things were wrong in the State, he could do nothing to remedy them. The resulting frustration would have soured a man of less generous temperament, especially as he knew himself—and was universally admitted—to possess great administrative ability and a thoroughly modern outlook. He had travelled widely, he was well read, he was an excellent sportsman, host and comrade, held in respect and affection by many warm friends in Britain, on the Continent of Europe, and in the United States. He was in every way qualified to deal successfully with the problems of fitting Kutch into the pattern of the new India which was merging into shape. Had it been his destiny to succeed to the *gaddi* when he was a younger and stronger man, he might well have gathered to his credit achievements which would have set him high among the Rulers of Kutch. But he had been in indifferent health for some years and, although he threw himself eagerly into his high responsibilities, his physique, already damaged by illness, could not for long sustain them. He had long enough to introduce useful reforms into the administration, to extend materially the irrigation system which owed so much to his father and to assist materially, and with characteristic generosity, in the foundation of the new city of Gandhidam. But as soon as the war was over, his health obliged him to seek treatment in Europe. Some of his brother Princes, who did not realize how ill he had become, were inclined to blame him for his lengthy absences from India at the time when Mr Attlee's post-war Government of Britain was planning to make over its power to Indian nationalist leaders as soon as might be. Yet they were saddened to realize how greatly they had misjudged him when he died, after ruling for only six years, in 1948. During his absences from the State, the burden of administration fell upon the Yuvaraj, Madansinhji, who had been trained in administration by his grandfather, Maharao Khengar, had travelled extensively in his company and had made the name of Kutch well known in yet another sphere of activity, the world of international tennis.



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It was fortunate indeed that Yuvaraj Madansinhji had enjoyed the advantages of this exceptional training, for it fell to him to negotiate, on behalf of his father and of the State, the terms of the original accession of Kutch to the new Union of India for the three vital subjects of defence, foreign relations and communications. Lord Mountbatten, the last British Viceroy of India, was eager to ensure that a workable political structure for India, of which Indian States were to be essential parts, should come into existence by August 1947, the month fixed for the ending of British rule. The Indian Princes were under great pressure to refrain from hindering the rapid march of events: to co-operate by taking their places in the new self-governing India which was about to be born. Yuvaraj Madansinhji thus had to face a heavy burden of responsibility and to take momentous decisions from which there could be no retreat. In the difficult position he acquitted himself in a manner which won him sincere esteem and respect both from the British officials and the Indian leaders with whom he was brought into contact.

On his father's death early in 1948, Maharao Madansinhji became the seventeenth—and last—descendant of Rao Khengar to exercise ruling powers in the State of Kutch. These ruling powers were to last only for a matter of weeks, at the end of which the Maharao concluded the arrangements for the final integration of Kutch into the Indian Union.

To begin with, the Government showed a curious ignorance of the traditional relationship between the various branches of the Jadeja clan: they actually proposed that Kutch should be incorporated in Saurashtra, which was to be treated (temporarily) as a separate State with the Maharaja Jam Saheb, representative of a junior branch of the Kutch Ruling Family, as Prince-President. From the point of view of Kutch such a plan was unthinkable and Maharao Madansinhji successfully opposed it, conveying to the Government of India that the best solution was to convert Kutch into a centrally administered area entirely apart from Saurashtra. In this way the identity



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of Kutch was preserved, so that even to-day (1958) it remains a separate district, distinct from Saurashtra, within the larger entity of the new Bombay State.

During the short period of his rule, Maharao Madansinhji had many urgent problems to settle. He had to safeguard the interests of all who depended upon him. Everyone was remembered. Even the *bhayyad* were not forgotten. By a gracious act, all the heavy debts which they owed to the Durbar were remitted: they began the new era with a clean slate—a memorable and noble ending of the long-drawn-out struggle which their disloyal behaviour towards the Maharao's ancestor, Maharao Bharmalji, had initiated. Further, the Maharao endowed institutes for education and made provision for them. Only when all this was done, had Maharao Madansinhji leisure to think of the immediate interests of himself and his successors. The final terms of the engagement were worthy of the dignity of both sides, and contain—true to the record of Kutch—certain provisions which are not found in the documents of other States. Notable among them is a pledge by the Government to provide the Maharao with foreign exchange for travel and study abroad and the preservation of his ancient maritime rights and privileges.

On June 1, 1948, the Government of India took over complete control of the State. The long and dramatic history of Kutch, as an independent unit, came to its logical end with the merging of the State in the new India. Some of the effects of this change, and of the gains to which each party to it may confidently look forward, have been outlined in the first part of this brief survey, which has traced through the centuries one of the most individual manifestations of the Indian genius for developing local loyalties which even the rich and varied pattern of Mother India can boast.



BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

The student of Kutchi history inevitably begins with Volume V of Sir James Campbell's monumental *Gazeteer of the Bombay Presidency* (Bombay 1880). This guides him to the relevant authorities for classical and mediaeval times, and to the principal British compilations of fact and observation : MacMurdo : *An Account of the Province of Kutch* : (*Transactions of the Literary Society of Bombay*, Volume II, London 1820); Walter : *Brief Sketch of the History of Kutch* (1828); Raikes : *Memoirs on Kutch State* (1855), (reprinted in *Bombay Government Records* No. XV – New Series). Some additional information is to be found in James Burnes : *A Sketch of the History of Cutch* (Edinburgh 1831); and in the admirably diverting Mrs Postans : *Cutch : or Random Sketches of Western India* (London 1838). *The Imperial Gazetteer* and Aitchison's *Treaties* are indispensable for consultation on the British period.

The bones of this narrative have not been shaped from published sources, but partly from unpublished compilations generously placed at my disposal in Kutch; partly from the traditional learning passed down from generation to generation of the Bards trained in the ancient Moti Poshal of Bhuj. I have been able to check this 'remembered history' not only against the Gujarati and Rajasthani traditions recorded by Forbes (*Ras Mala*) and Tod (*Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan: Western India*), but also against the standard sources which students of Indian history are accustomed to consult for each successive period. These sources I have not listed because they are familiar. To ensure that my own scholarship has not grown out-of-date, I have refreshed it from the admirable publications of the Bharatiya Itihasa Samiti, which have the advantage of taking into account the latest discoveries of the epigraphists and archaeologists. How much the background owes to the work of scholars like Dr. Majumdar, Dr. Pusalker and Professor Nilakanta Sastri will be plain. It is a tribute to the accuracy of the trained Bardic memory that Kutchi tradition fits so well into the new picture which modern research is drawing of the past of western India.

Without the help of His Highness Maharao Madansinhji, who placed at my disposal all the resources, oral and written, of Kutchi history; of the Librarian of the Library of India House and of the India Office Library; and of many other helpers, principal among them my wife, the pages which precede could never have been written.



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